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## LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,  
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

# LECTURES

EXEGETICAL AND PRACTICAL

ON

## THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

*WITH A REVISED TRANSLATION OF THE EPISTLE  
AND NOTES ON THE GREEK TEXT*

BY THE

REV. ROBERT JOHNSTONE, LL.B.  
GLASGOW

EDINBURGH  
WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND CO.

1875

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TO THE  
UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION  
OF  
PARLIAMENTARY ROAD, GLASGOW,  
  
*This Book is Inscribed,*  
  
WITH MUCH AFFECTION,  
BY  
THEIR FRIEND AND MINISTER,  
  
THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E.

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**I**N object and plan this book is similar to one published by the author four years ago on the Epistle of James. His aim has been to produce such an exposition of the Epistle to the Philippians as might be of service to Christian readers generally, and might at the same time, so far as was possible in a work of which the other was the main purpose, give some special help to students of the original. The larger part of the volume, accordingly, consists of lectures, in which the Epistle is expounded, section by section, with the fulness of illustration, and directness of practical application, belonging to homiletical treatment, and without the exhibition of the *processes* of exegesis to any greater extent than might reasonably be expected to interest readers of fair intelligence. To the lectures are appended a revised translation of the Epistle, and notes on the Greek text. These notes have been placed in a part of the book by themselves,—an arrangement which seems to the author preferable on various grounds to that adopted in some similar works, of having the remarks on points of grammar scattered throughout the book as footnotes.

The lectures were, in substance, delivered from the pulpit in the ordinary course of Sabbath ministration. They have since, however, been re-written; and, in the course of transcription, such changes have been made, by omission, condensation, or expansion, as seemed needful in view of publishing

them. In all of them the author's endeavour has been, so to set forth clearly what appeared to him to be the precise meaning of the Divine Word, and so to illustrate the practical bearings of the truth, as to 'edify the body of Christ.'

In the revised translation, his aim has been to exhibit, with as little divergence as possible from the Authorized Version, the exact sense of the original, according to the most approved text. The text which has been followed is that of Ellicott. The translations of Alford, Conybeare, and Ellicott have been carefully compared.

The notes on the Greek Text embrace a reference, more or less full, to everything in the grammatical construction of the Epistle which seemed to the author to call for special comment. Brief discussions of various other questions than those strictly grammatical will also be found in this part of the volume. It appeared the natural place for everything connected with the processes of exegesis which it seemed desirable to say, but which could not satisfactorily be included in the lectures.

In studying the Epistle, the author has used the aid of Calvin, Beza, Bengel, Peirce, Storr, De Wette, Wiesinger, Schenkel, Braune and Hackett, Meyer, Van Hengel, Alford, Ellicott, Eadie, and Lightfoot. To Meyer, Ellicott, Eadie, and Lightfoot, his obligations are particularly great. Of the less strictly critical expositions of the Epistle, he has derived most advantage from the Lectures of the learned and eloquent Huguenot, Jean Daillé; from the characteristically thoughtful and earnest little book of Dr. Vaughan; and from the charming treatise of Neander.

At the end of the volume is given a translation of Polycarp's letter to the Christians of Philippi,—which seems to form a suitable appendix to an exposition of Paul's Epistle to that

church, as affording a most interesting glimpse of their spiritual condition half a century, or thereby, after the apostle had gone to his reward. The translation has been made from the text of Jacobson (*Patres Apostolici*, Oxford, 1847); and has been compared with the versions of Cave, Wake, and Chevallier, and with that given in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*.

The author has to acknowledge, with very hearty thanks, the kindness of his friend, the Rev. David Kinnear, B.A. Lond., of Dalbeattie, who has aided him in the revision of the proof-sheets.

2 WELLESLEY PLACE, GLASGOW,  
*April 3, 1875.*



## C O N T E N T S.



	PAGE
INTRODUCTION, . . . . .	1
LECT. I.—Address and Salutation, . . . .	Chap. i. 1, 2,
II.—Pleasant Memories and Bright Hopes, . . . . .	,, i. 3-8,
III.—Prayer for Spiritual Discernment, . . . .	,, i. 9-11,
IV.—The Gospel in Rome, . . . .	,, i. 12-18,
V.—Sufferings turning to Salvation, . . . .	,, i. 19, 20,
VI.—The Saint's Life—Christ, . . . .	,, i. 21, 1st clause,
VII.—The Saint's Death—Gain, . . . .	,, i. 21, 2nd clause,
VIII.—A Strait betwixt Two, . . . .	,, i. 22-26,
IX.—Conversation becoming the Gospel, . . . .	,, i. 27, 1st clause,
X.—Stedfastness for Christ, . . . .	,, i. 27-30,
XI.—Christian Concord, . . . .	,, ii. 1-4,
XII.—The Great Example, . . . .	,, ii. 5-11,
XIII.—Working out our own Salvation, . . . .	,, ii. 12, 13,
XIV.—Lights in the World, . . . .	,, ii. 14-16,
XV.—Joy in Prospect of Martyrdom, . . . .	,, ii. 17, 18,
XVI.—Mission of Timothy, . . . .	,, ii. 19-24,
XVII.—Mission of Epaphroditus, . . . .	,, ii. 25-30,
XVIII.—Joy in the Lord, . . . .	,, iii. 1,
XIX.—Justification by Faith, . . . .	,, iii. 2-9,
XX.—The Saint's Aspirations, . . . .	,, iii. 10, 11,
XXI.—Pressing toward the Mark, . . . .	,, iii. 12-14,
XXII.—True Wisdom proved by Godliness, . . . .	,, iii. 15, 16,
XXIII.—Wise Choice of Examples, . . . .	,, iii. 17-19,
	306

	PAGE
LECT. XXIV.—The Saint's Citizenship and Hope, Chap. iii. 20, 21,	320
XXV.—Stedfastness in the Lord, . . . . . , iv. 1,	334
XXVI.—Brotherly-Kindness, . . . . . , iv. 2, 3,	342
XXVII.—Prayerfulness and the Peace of God, . . . . . , iv. 4-7,	355
XXVIII.—Summary of Duty, . . . . . , iv. 8, 9,	374
XXIX.—Christian Contentment, . . . . . , iv. 10-13,	391
XXX.—Christian Liberality and its Reward, . . . . . , iv. 14-23,	406
REVISED TRANSLATION OF THE EPISTLE, . . . . .	421
NOTES ON THE GREEK TEXT OF CHAPTER I., . . . . .	429
"    "    "    "    II., . . . . .	446
"    "    "    "    III., . . . . .	459
"    "    "    "    IV., . . . . .	471
APPENDIX.—EPISTLE OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS, . . . . .	479

# LECTURES

## ON THE

### EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

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#### INTRODUCTION.

THE town of Philippi was situated in the east of Macedonia, on the banks of a little river called the Gangites, and about ten miles from the shore of the Archipelago. It had its name from the famous Macedonian king Philip, father of Alexander the Great, by whom the old town on the site was enlarged and fortified. Various circumstances combined to make the place prosperous. The plain around is well watered and fertile ; and in ancient times gold and silver mines were worked in the neighbourhood with considerable success. The chief importance of the town, however, arose from its standing on the great highway from Asia to Western Europe. The mountains, which for a long distance form a natural wall, sink down here and allow a passage, steep, but not seriously difficult. It was no doubt this advantage of position which led Philip to fortify the town. For the same reason also the neighbourhood was chosen by Brutus and Cassius as the scene of the event which mainly has given Philippi celebrity in secular history, the great battle between the republican armies commanded by them, and the forces of Mark Antony and young Octavianus Cæsar, afterwards the Emperor Augustus, which decided the question who should rule the civilised world.

*Lectures on Philippians.*

In memory of his victory, Augustus constituted the town what the Romans called a colony. To this attention is drawn in the Acts of the Apostles (xvi. 12), the fact being there referred to evidently as one of some moment in its bearings on the progress of the kingdom of Christ in Philippi. Paul, in the course of his missionary travels, had visited other towns enjoying this particular privilege, in speaking of which, however, the sacred historian makes no mention of it; but at Philippi the apostle was to some extent personally affected by influences peculiar to a colony. A Roman colony bore no close resemblance to anything known by the name in modern times. It was constituted by a formal enactment of the supreme authority at Rome; and might be described as a garrison of Romans in a conquered territory. To the colonists, frequently veteran soldiers whom their general desired to reward, a portion of the land in the neighbourhood of the town selected was given as their property. They retained the much-prized privilege of Roman citizenship. Their chief duty was to guard the empire from revolts of the vanquished, and from incursions of the barbarians. Politically, a town invested with this character was a kind of miniature of the metropolis. The traveller who passed through a colony heard the Latin tongue, saw the insignia of Roman power, and was under Roman law in the strictest sense. The pride of Roman citizenship met him everywhere. Bearing these things in mind, we see why it was that the heartless owners of the poor slave girl, whom Paul had healed of her insanity, thus putting an end to their wicked gains, made their charge before the magistrates in this particular form: ‘These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, *being Romans*’ (Acts xvi. 20, 21). The fury of the people too, on hearing this accusation, is thus explained; and also the intensity of the fear of the magistrates, when they learned that Paul and Silas were themselves Roman citizens, and remembered that in their dealings

with them one of the most cherished privileges of the citizenship, immunity from bodily chastisement, had been violated. In more than one passage of this Epistle, moreover, the apostle's language seems to have been moulded by the remembrance that he was writing to persons who lived in a Roman colony.

At a time, and from causes, of which no record is left to us, Philippi fell into decay, or suffered sudden destruction. Its site has long been a wilderness,—no memorial of the busy life of old presenting itself to the traveller, except the vague outlines of the city walls, and of some of its houses, and over all the area fragments of marble columns and heaps of rubbish, overgrown by thorns and briars.

The chief interest which Christians have in Philippi, arises from the fact that it was the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached, at least by the lips of an apostle. On Paul's second great missionary tour, about twenty years after the ascension of our Lord, he had come down to Troas, a town on the Asiatic shore of the Archipelago, from which, on a clear evening, a point in Europe can be seen, the towering promontory of Athos, in Macedonia. Immediately around the apostle lay the scenery of the noblest poem of heathen antiquity, that which tells of the wars of Troy. To Paul, a man of fine general culture, who could gain the ear of the polished Athenians by quoting what 'certain of their own poets had said,' the plain of Troy could not be without interest. But zeal for the progress of the kingdom of Christ was the great missionary's consuming passion ; his heart was full of pity for fellow-men living and dying in darkness and sin ; and the Trojan war was, after all, a very little matter for him who knew himself set in the high places of the field, to fight the battles of the Lord. Retiring to rest, perhaps after a glimpse of distant Europe, certainly with the spiritual needs of Europe before his heart, he received from God in the night a command to arise and pass over. In a vision, a man of Macedonia stood beside him, and entreated

him, saying, ‘Come over into Macedonia and help us.’ Rejoicing in the prospect of new labours and new successes, undeterred by the prospect of new sufferings, Paul and his company, in obedience to the heavenly vision, at once set sail from Troas to take possession of Europe for Christ. After a prosperous voyage of two days they landed at Neapolis, the port of Philippi, and immediately went up to the town. The work, the success, and the persecution there are familiar to all.

To the church then founded, and which may well have still comprised among its members Lydia, and the jailor, and the slave girl, was addressed the Epistle before us. It was written during Paul’s imprisonment at Rome,<sup>1</sup> the period in his history to which the last verses in the Acts of the Apostles bring us,—probably, judging from various statements in the Epistle, towards the close of the imprisonment, in the end of A.D. 62, or beginning of A.D. 63, and thus about eleven or twelve years after his first visit to Philippi.<sup>2</sup> During those years he had revisited the town at least twice.

<sup>1</sup> By some scholars it has been thought that the Epistle was written during the apostle’s imprisonment at Cæsarea, before he was sent to Rome. The only argument of any plausibility in support of this view is found in the fact that, in the 13th verse of the 1st chapter, he speaks of his ‘bonds in Christ’ being ‘manifest in all the *prætorium*’ (rendered in our version ‘palace’); and, in Acts xxiii. 35, we are told that at Cæsarea he was lodged in ‘Herod’s *prætorium*’ (‘judgment hall’). But the use of this word in the Epistle accords equally well with the apostle’s position at Rome, designating either the camp in which he lived, or rather (see the Lecture on the passage) the brigade of troops from which his sentries were taken. On the other hand, the reference in iv. 22 to ‘Cæsar’s household,’ while it accords perfectly with the idea that he was writing in Rome, does not suit Cæsarea at all, without great forcing. The allusions in the Epistle, too, to expectations of a speedy termination of the imprisonment, either by release or by condemnation to death, lead our thoughts at once to Rome. Indeed, the whole tone of the letter appears to be in perfect congruity with the common opinion that it was written there; whilst, on any other view, something unnatural in its tone in various places will be felt.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Lightfoot has devoted a long chapter of the Introduction to his *Commentary on Philippians* to a discussion of the order in which the

Regarding the condition of the Philippian church, we know nothing except from intimations in this Epistle. It is evident that the Christians there had been subjected to persecution more or less severe, but had clung firmly to the faith of Christ. To Paul himself they were knit in singularly close affection. The unusual warmth and uninterruptedness of their love to him, as compared with that of some of the other churches he had planted, may perhaps be accounted for partly by the fewness of Jews among them. Unbelieving Jews and Judaizing professors of Christianity were the apostle's most virulent calumniators and opponents. Now, in Philippi, which was not to any great extent a commercial town, and thus held out few inducements to foreigners to settle there, the Jewish community was not numerous. This is shown by the fact that at the time of Paul's first visit they seem to have had no synagogue, but on the Sabbath merely held a prayer-meeting by the river-side.

The love of the Philippian Christians to the apostle showed itself in deeds. Again and again they had, out of their poverty, contributed money for his relief in times of special need ; and the immediate occasion of his writing this letter was his sending back to them Epaphroditus, who had come to Rome from Philippi with a gift from the church. At Rome, Epaphroditus had thrown himself into evangelistic work under the apostle's direction ; and this with such intense devotion, that his physical strength gave way, so that 'for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death.' But God restored him, and on his recovery he returned home bearing with him this Epistle.

epistles of the captivity were written. In this he opposes the view of the vast majority of biblical scholars, that those to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, which evidently belong to one group, were written early in the imprisonment, and that to the Philippians late,—maintaining that the case was exactly the reverse. His argument is characteristically candid and able ; yet the ordinary opinion still appears to me the more probable. The strong expectation which we find in the Epistle to the Philippians, of a speedy termination of the imprisonment, seems to point decidedly to a late date, later considerably than that of the others.

In its contents this letter has some resemblance to the first to the other great Macedonian church, that of Thessalonica. We find in it little of the abstract reasoning which is so prominent in the Epistle to the Romans, and nothing of that stern reproof which abounds in the Epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians. The church at Philippi was evidently well instructed, sound in the faith, and distinguished by strength and beauty of Christian character. Here, accordingly, the apostle writes less as a theological teacher, or an ecclesiastical ruler, than as a Christian friend to Christian friends ; and hence the view here given us of his own personal religious life, of the grace and tenderness, as well as the strength, of that most noble character, is peculiarly full and peculiarly refreshing and helpful. ‘Strangely full of joy and thanksgiving amidst adversity, like the apostle’s midnight hymn from the depth of his Philippian dungeon, this Epistle went forth from his prison at Rome.’<sup>1</sup>

As we should anticipate in a letter of the kind now described, there is but little of methodical arrangement. We have a simple natural outflow of religious feeling,—comforting, no doubt, to the writer himself, who thus opened his heart to his friends ; edifying, strengthening, and refreshing to the Philippians ; and eminently fitted, through the divine blessing, to give wisdom and encouragement to all generations of readers. ‘To all ages of the church—to our own especially—this Epistle reads a great lesson. While we are expending our strength on theological definitions or ecclesiastical rules, it recalls us from these distractions to the very heart and centre of the gospel—the life of Christ, and the life in Christ. Here is the meeting-point of all our differences, the healing of all our feuds, the true life alike of individuals and churches.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bullock, in Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*; article, ‘Epistle to the Philippians.’

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Lightfoot.

Into the condition of the church of Philippi, about half a century after the apostle wrote his Epistle, we have an interesting and most pleasing glimpse through an extant letter to them from Polycarp, pastor of the church at Smyrna.<sup>1</sup> His friend, Ignatius of Antioch, condemned to death for his religion by the Emperor Trajan, had been taken to Rome, to be thrown to wild beasts in the amphitheatre. On his way he passed through Philippi, and there was most kindly received by the brethren, and escorted by them on his journey. The interest in this noble martyr for Christ, which was thus awakened in their minds, led apparently to an application from them to Polycarp for copies of some letters which Ignatius had written during his journey. These he sent to them, and along with them, according to another request which they had made, a letter of counsel from himself. The martyrdom of Ignatius falling somewhere between A.D. 107 and A.D. 116, the date of this letter cannot be put later than A.D. 120. At that time the church evidently retained much of its pristine earnestness and spiritual beauty. Polycarp refers to serious flaws, of which he had heard, in the character of certain members; but the brethren generally were still conspicuous for Christian excellence. He congratulates them on their affectionate attention to Ignatius and other suffering servants of Christ. He ‘rejoices that the sturdy root of their faith, well reported of from early days, still endures, and bears fruit unto our Lord Jesus Christ.’ He ‘has confidence that they are well versed in the Scriptures.’<sup>2</sup> This is certainly a very pleasant last glimpse of the church so dear to the Apostle Paul. The last glimpse it is. In ecclesiastical records of a later time the name of Philippi is occasionally mentioned, but nothing in connection with it to

<sup>1</sup> A document which professes to be a letter to the Philippians from Ignatius has also come down to us. There is the strongest reason, however, for regarding it as spurious, a composition of a later age.

<sup>2</sup> The whole letter, which on various grounds well repays perusal, will be found at the end of the present volume.

show whether the professed followers of Christ there continued to ‘adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.’ Among the ruins of the city there have been found only the scantiest Christian remains. ‘Of the church which stood foremost among all the apostolic communities in faith and love, it may literally be said, that not one stone stands upon another. Its whole career is a signal monument of the inscrutable counsels of God.’<sup>1</sup>

That the Epistle to the Philippians is a genuine composition of Paul, there is the amplest evidence, external and internal. Even the destructive criticism of the modern sceptical school has scarcely ventured to assail its Pauline authorship,—only two or three voices having been heard professing doubt or denial; and the arguments put forth in support of the hostile position have been frivolous and forced in the highest degree, wholly insufficient to establish even any approach to a plausible case. The mode of reasoning, indeed, adopted by Baur, the principal objector, and Schwegler, his admiring disciple, is so utterly and obviously absurd, that it is often difficult to believe men of such learning and ability to have really intended their arguing to be taken as serious. The words of Dean Alford are not extravagant, that the objections which have been offered to the genuineness of this Epistle afford ‘an instance of the very insanity of hypercriticism.’

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lightfoot.

## I.

### ADDRESS AND SALUTATION.

' Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons : 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.'—PHIL. i. 1, 2.

THE Epistle begins, as the letters of the ancients usually did, with an announcement of the name of the writer, and of the persons addressed. Here, at the very outset, an evidence presents itself that Paul had full confidence in the love and obedience of the Philippians. In most of his letters he appends to his name his official designation 'apostle,' and in some he finds himself compelled even to maintain by argument in the body of the Epistle the reality and completeness of his apostolic authority. Here, as in the Epistles to the other prominent Macedonian church, that of Thessalonica, the official title is not employed, plainly because he knew that no such assertion of his rightful claim to be heard with deference and obedience was at all needed.

With his own name he associates in the superscription that of '*Timotheus*,' or Timothy. This eminent evangelist, and dear friend of the apostle, was well known to the Philippians. He had been with Paul and Silas when the church was founded ; and during the eleven or twelve years intervening between that time and the date of the Epistle, had paid several visits to the town. In the Epistle, too, Paul speaks of sending him again speedily. The introduction of his name was therefore very natural. It was, however, only a courtesy. The letter, as regards its substance, is Paul's alone, and carries with it full

apostolic authority. You will observe that the very first words of the 3d verse, which begins the letter proper as distinguished from the mere heading and salutation, are plainly Paul's alone: 'I thank my God.' The same mode of expression continues throughout; and where Timothy is referred to, he is spoken of in the third person: 'I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you' (ii. 19).

The designation '*servants of Jesus Christ*,' is a modest and beautiful one. James, the brother of the Lord, similarly begins his letter: 'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.' You feel that, in its connection, the phrase suggests official position in the church; but only suggests it. It is in itself quite general, describing all who, by taking Christ as their Master and Lord, have entered into true freedom.

'*To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi.*' We have here a most instructive paraphrase for 'church.' According to the true idea of a church, you see, 'church members' and 'saints' are exchangeable terms. The radical thought in the name '*saints*,' or '*holy*' persons, as it is employed in Scripture, is consecration, separation to the special service of God. A reader goes back at once instinctively to this primary idea, when he finds it stated that the official garments of the Jewish priests, and the vessels used in the sanctuary services, were '*holy*.' In the prayer recorded in the 17th chapter of John, the Lord said, speaking of those whom God 'had given Him,' '*For their sakes I sanctify myself*' — set myself apart as High Priest, to offer up an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin — '*that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*' His consecration was to the intent that His people also might be consecrated. Here enters the thought of purity of soul, for true acceptable service can be rendered to God only by him who is consecrated, not simply by certain external symbols, but by the anointing of the quickening and purifying Spirit. Believers in Christ are by their Saviour's grace separated from the world to serve God, and this by the absolute devotion of their

whole nature. Our secular life, our business and recreation, Christ would have us make holy, as really as the hours we spend in the house of public worship, or in any definite, formal religious service. As the prophet has it, ‘Upon the bells of the horses should be *Holiness unto the Lord*, and every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah should be holiness unto the Lord of hosts.’ Among true believers ‘no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord’s.’

It is of the very highest importance that this truth should be most seriously pondered by us. We are apt to think of a Christian as one who accepts certain doctrines and performs certain formal services. But the purpose of God in revealing to us the truth, and appointing religious ordinances, was that men’s whole being should, through the influence of the truth and of the ordinances, be made *saintly*. ‘Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might *sanctify and cleanse* it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.’ His prayer was, ‘*Sanctify* them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.’ The only really satisfying proof that the gospel has been truly, intelligently, cordially believed,—that the means of grace have been savingly efficient,—is holiness of character. If we were as profoundly impressed with the conviction of this fact as its importance claims, dear friends, would there not be change in the life of all of us? Would not the issue of ‘searchings of heart’ in some of us be a sense that the needful *radical* change is still lacking, church-goers though we all are, and most of us church members?

Paul tells us the secret of true saintliness in the addition he makes to the simple word ‘saints,’—‘*in Christ Jesus*.’ Out of Christ none are saints; but all genuine believers are saints,

because they are ‘in Him,’ members of His mystical body, and thus have within them the pulsations and working of *His* life. And the more that by faith we draw from His life, ever the more are we saintly. The thought of the union of Christians to their Lord is one most precious to them all; for in that union they recognise the spring of all spiritual happiness and strength. The Apostle Paul dwells everywhere upon this union with manifest and exceeding delight. The frequency with which the expression ‘in Christ’ occurs in his letters, strikes every attentive reader, and shows the constancy of his joy and gratitude that he lived and moved ‘in Him.’ In the course of our examination of this Epistle we shall find many passages giving opportunity for illustrating the subject in various aspects.

In the address ‘to *all* the saints which are at Philippi,’ we see the warmth of the apostle’s affection for his friends there. Similarly, we have at the end of the letter, ‘salute *every* saint in Christ Jesus.’ It is as if he said, ‘I wish every one of you individually to feel that he is dear to me.’ It is not improbable that another thought also was meant to be suggested to his first readers by the mention of them *all*. There are several indications in the letter, more or less distinct, that Paul had been pained by learning of some alienations of feeling among certain of the prominent members of the church. These brethren, I apprehend, could hardly help hearing him say to them in the ‘all,’ ‘I have ardent brotherly love for every one of you, because I have good reason to think of you as all in Christ, and all loved by Him: should you not all love one another?’

To the mention of the church generally, the apostle appends ‘with the bishops and deacons.’ It is not his custom thus to specify the office-bearers in the headings of his letters, and various reasons have been suggested for his doing so here. By some expositors it has been thought that Paul wished in this way to acknowledge special liberality on the part of the

office-bearers, in contributing to the gift which Epaphroditus had brought to Rome; by others, that there had been evidence of a disposition among some of the private members of the church to disregard the legitimate authority of their spiritual rulers, and that by this reference the apostle desired to give the office-bearers his support, as holding their position by the law of Christ. Either of these suppositions may be true; we cannot tell. But you may remember that when 'it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church (of Jerusalem), to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, they wrote letters by them after this manner,—The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting' (Acts xv. 22, 23). Now it is in every way probable that the church of Philippi had by Epaphroditus, along with their pecuniary gift, sent Paul also a letter, which, like the letters just referred to, may have had in the heading some special mention of the office-bearers, thus,—'The brethren at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, send greeting.' The employment by Paul, in his reply, of the same words, may possibly then mean nothing more than that, in a letter which, to some little extent, had the character of a formal acknowledgment of money received, he courteously accepted the givers' own way of describing themselves.

It is obviously probable in the highest degree, that, in a passage where the warmth and delicacy of his love have led the apostle to speak expressly of '*all* the saints,' his special mention of the office-bearers leaves out no class of them. Now, throughout the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, we find very frequent reference made to 'elders,' as the principal office-bearers in the church; as essential, indeed, to the full regular organization of a Christian society. Paul and Barnabas, we are told, 'ordained elders in every church' (Acts xiv. 23). It is evident, therefore,—the deaconship being well known as a distinct office from that of the elder,—that, if all the office-bearers of the

church of Philippi are mentioned in the verse before us, then ‘*bishop*’ is simply another name for ‘elder.’ This conclusion is supported by abundant evidence in other parts of the New Testament. The most distinguished recent Episcopalian expositors of Scripture, such as Bishop Ellicott, Dean Alford, and Canon Lightfoot, admit that, beyond all reasonable disputation, in the primitive church the office of ‘*bishop*’ was identical with that of ‘elder’ (or ‘*presbyter*,’ the Greek equivalent of ‘elder’); and that, however early episcopacy in the prelatical sense may have appeared, it does not find support in the New Testament. I need not here go at length into the proofs of this position. It is perhaps well to remark, however, that in our English version some of these proofs are hidden. Thus, when Paul, having from Miletus ‘sent to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the church,’ enjoined on them to ‘take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them *overseers*’ (Acts xx. 17, 28),—this last word is the same which is usually rendered ‘*bishops*,’ and from which the word ‘episcopacy,’ and, indeed, in a more remote way, the word ‘*bishop*’ itself also, are derived. Again, when Peter says, ‘The *elders* which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder. Feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight* thereof, not by constraint, but willingly’ (1 Pet. v. 1, 2),—the expression ‘*taking the oversight*’ is, strictly, ‘*acting as bishops*.’

The earliest Christian churches, as you know, were composed of persons who had been trained in Judaism. The arrangements of the synagogue were therefore naturally followed in various respects in their meetings, and, in particular, the officers chosen by the authority of the apostles to regulate their affairs were named ‘*elders*,’ like the rulers of the synagogue. Among the Greeks, the word to which ‘*bishop*’ corresponds, and which according to its derivation means ‘*overseer*,’ was a familiar one, being the name given to government officials charged with certain duties. When Christianity entered the Gentile world,

then, this name, familiar to the ear, came somehow, not unnaturally, to be given to the rulers of the churches, as well as the name ‘elders,’ which, as applied to rulers, was strange to the Greeks.

In all parts of the church a certain precedence naturally, and with apostolic sanction,<sup>1</sup> fell to those of the ‘elders,’ or ‘bishops,’ who not merely discharged the function of ruling, but also had the gift of teaching, and therefore ‘laboured in the word and doctrine.’ One of these, no doubt, generally had the presidency in the meetings of the ‘presbytery,’ or body of elders. That from this presidency, or moderatorship, among equals, there should arise, in course of time, and that no long course, the system of prelatical episcopacy, in which the bishop and the presbyter belong to distinct orders of the ministry, will not seem wonderful to any one who has either carefully read history, or studied the workings of human nature around him and within him.

Of the institution of the office of ‘deacon,’ a narrative is given in the 6th chapter of Acts, where we are told that on account of ‘a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews’ in the church at Jerusalem, ‘because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration,’ the people were asked by the apostles to choose ‘seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,’ whom they might ‘appoint over this business,—and that, an election having been accordingly held, the men chosen were brought to the apostles, and set apart to their special work by prayer and the imposition of hands. These seven are not called ‘deacons;’ but there can be no reasonable doubt, from the nature of their duties, that we have here, in fact, the origin of this office. The duties of the deacons were chiefly to take charge of the money contributed by the brethren for the relief of the poor members, and to see to its judicious and equitable distribution. From the comparatively late and, so to speak, occasional origin of this office,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 17.

and from the fact that when Paul speaks of having left Titus in Crete to ‘set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city’ (Titus i. 5), no mention is made of deacons, we may perhaps fairly conclude that the deaconship, while a most useful and honourable office, is yet not absolutely essential to the regular organization of a church, as the eldership is. In almost every Christian society, however, there will be found a fulfilment of the Lord’s words, ‘The poor ye always have with you;’ and if the church is at all faithful to her calling, she will always ‘remember’ her poor. By some means, therefore, the work of the deacon must be done.

The announcement of the name of the writer and of the persons addressed is followed, as was usual in the letters of the ancients, and as we find almost always in the apostolic Epistles, by an affectionate salutation. The highest form of the Christian life, my brethren, is seen when energetic love is fully pervaded by a spirit of gentleness and sympathy, exhibiting itself in true politeness to all of all social positions, and in little things as well as great, according to the broad apostolic precept, ‘Be pitiful, be courteous.’ The apostles themselves rose in conduct to this height, enforcing precept by example. Their letters, written in the midst of arduous and harassing work, yet show diligent attention to all the kindly courtesies of social life. The last chapter of Romans, which is almost wholly taken up with greetings and expressions of personal affection, deserves more study, because it is fitted to give more instruction as to how peace and joy are to be maintained in beauty and sweetness in Christian intercourse, than many believers seem to think.

The salutation to the Philippians is that which, in various forms, occurs most frequently in the letters of the apostles. How beautiful it is! How rich in holy affection! Good wishes for the temporal welfare of friends have their own place. John, writing to ‘the well-beloved Gaius,’ expresses his desire ‘that

he may prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospereth.' But this 'prospering of the soul' must always stand first in a Christian's wishes. If we know Christ,—then, as our chief desire for ourselves is growth in the beauty and strength and blessedness of religion, so for others, and specially for those who are personally dear to us, our most earnest wish and prayer must be, that '*grace and peace*' may be given to them, and that ever more and more; that the Lord would 'remember them with the favour which He beareth unto His people, and visit them with His salvation, that they may see the good of His chosen, that they may rejoice in the gladness of His nation, that they may glory with His inheritance.'

From '*grace*', the free favour of God, come all our blessings. In its use in the salutation, '*peace*' being named separately, the chief reference is, no doubt, to the manifestation of the divine favour in the bestowal of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. You remember the statement of Luke, that the child Jesus 'grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and *the grace of God* was upon Him.' Every day revealed in Him new excellences. The lovely bud of a perfectly holy childhood was seen opening into the glorious flower of a perfectly holy manhood. There was not here *transforming* grace. None was needed for Him who, from the beginning, 'knew no sin.' Yet the use of the word is plainly analogous to what we find in the apostolic salutation, in so far as it refers specially to holy beauty. Grace to transform the naturally sinful into the likeness of the sinless Jesus, this is what is asked of God—for the words are really a prayer—in the salutation.

The meet companion of such '*grace*' is '*peace*', also given through the free favour of God,—peace springing from the knowledge of His love in Christ, '*peace passing all understanding, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.*' An Eastern, when he enters a house, says, 'Peace be to this house,' as thoughtlessly as we commonly say 'Good morning'

to a casual acquaintance whom we meet on the street. Our Lord taught the apostles and the seventy disciples to employ the familiar salutation with depth of meaning, thinking, while they uttered it, how alone true peace could come to the house, and praying that God would send it. ‘Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house : and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it ; if not, it shall return to you again.’ Think you not that the courtesies of Christians should *always* have reality of significance ? If the spirit of our Master filled us, diffusing its genial power through the whole being, and ever in bright activity, would not blessing go forth from us, through the energy of prayer, even at the slight touches of social kindness, as virtue went out from the hem of the Lord’s garment ? I doubt not that, with the apostle’s affectionate ‘Peace be unto you,’ it was so.

The prayer of the salutation is presented to ‘*God our Father,*’—Him ‘from whom cometh down every good gift, and every perfect gift.’ How broad and stable is the ground of confidence for us, exhibited in that sweet name ‘Father !’ He who ‘of His own will begat us with the word of truth ;’ who ‘hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father ;’ who has told us that, if earthly parents, ‘being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, much more shall He, our Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him,—this God, my brethren, will certainly not leave unregarded any petition of His children. ‘*And the Lord Jesus Christ,*’ who ‘humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,’ in order that a way might be opened by which, consistently with the glory of the divine character, ‘grace and peace’ might be bestowed on men,—will He, now possessing ‘all power in heaven and in earth,’ fail to employ it to bestow ‘grace and peace’ on longing hearts, or to answer the cry of loving Christian souls for the quickening of those who are dear to them ?

## II.

## PLEASANT MEMORIES AND BRIGHT HOPES.

'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always, in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now ; 6 Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ : 7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart ; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace : 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.'—PHIL. i. 3-8.

THIS first paragraph, or, more exactly, sentence, of the letter proper, introduces us at once to the peculiarity of the apostle's style, which in all his writings is very marked. Where style of expression has not been by definite effort conformed to certain rhetorical principles, but is to a considerable extent natural, it of necessity corresponds to the characteristics of a man's mind and heart ; just as the particular nature of a tree expresses itself in specialty of form, in the regular beauty, for example, of the poplar and the palm, or the irregular beauty of the oak and the cedar. Now an examination of Scripture proves that divine inspiration wrought in entire harmony with individual temperament, with free action of thought and play of feeling ; and thus we have most obvious differences of style among the sacred writers. Whilst all pervaded and guided by the Holy Ghost, David, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, Paul, James, and John, have yet such decided individualities, that even a cursory reader cannot fail to observe them. This genuine human

element in the Word of God, appealing as it does to our brotherly sympathies, has somewhat to do with the winning influence of the book over all candid souls.<sup>1</sup>

In Paul, extraordinary intellectual power was associated with singular liveliness of spirit and singular tenderness of affection; and his style accords with this. His reasonings are couched occasionally in a rigid logical form; and now and again the most exquisite poetic thought takes the most perfect regularity of poetic expression, as in the wonderful psalm of love in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, or the closing verses of the great chapter on the resurrection in that Epistle. But, as a rule, his sentences, laden with precious truth and holy emotion, are long and complicated, and thus not unfrequently hard of interpretation. We see in the writer's mind one weighty thought pressing for expression after another so fast, that no time is given for full separate exhibition; and ever and anon a gush of warm feeling comes in, in a strong current, swaying the sentence in a direction different from that in which at first apparently it had tended. One who studies the apostle's writings with anything of the sympathy which Christian faith gives, feels growing delight that, through this very contortedness of the style, he is brought into such close contact with so great a soul,—so admitted into fellowship as to witness the private workings of an intellect of such force and vivacity, and of a heart so generous and tender.

The paragraph now before us, which, as has been said, excellently illustrates the apostle's peculiar style, is an ascription of thanks to God for the spiritual prosperity of the Philippian church. It brings before us the feelings of a godly minister on the retrospect of his connection with a godly congregation.

It is the apostle's usual practice to begin his letters with a thanksgiving. He delights to recognise good in those to whom

<sup>1</sup> This point is illustrated at some length in the introductory paragraphs of the Lecture on chap. iii. 2-9.

he writes, even in cases where there may be also much to reprove; and he wins his way to their hearts by beginning with the good. In melancholy contrast stands out the Epistle to the Galatians, where immediately after the salutation comes the sad stern ‘I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.’

In a Christian, the natural outflow of gladness is in thanks to our Father in heaven, from whose kindness come all the agencies of true happiness. Alas, Christian brethren, that we so often show the new nature to be as yet so feeble within us, by forgetting to raise our hearts in gratitude to Him! Yet more distinctively Christian is it, when the heart gives thanks for the good of *others*. The tendency of sin is to disintegrate society, to make men isolated in spirit, self absorbing their interest. The natural heart, as it comes increasingly under the power of worldliness, tends ever to less and less sympathy with others, less sadness through their sorrows, less pleasure through their happiness. The influence of Christianity is entirely in the other direction. Love is its essence, and love involves sympathy, ‘rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.’ Most of all distinctively Christian, absolutely distinctively Christian, is the spirit which we find exemplified by the apostle here, joy and thankfulness chiefly for the *spiritual* good of others. There are many who from natural kindness of heart, not altogether blighted as yet by the withering power of sin, will join Christians in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and building hospitals for the diseased; but to whom the news of a religious awakening brings no pleasure, who feel no interest whatever in efforts to extend the knowledge and power of the gospel. To the true believer in Christ, no pleasure is higher than that afforded by evidence of the progress of the Saviour’s kingdom. He delights to know that the children in the orphanages of Rajpootana have

been saved from the wretchedness of the famine, and are lovingly fed and clothed ; but his chief happiness in thinking of them is to know that they are under influences fitted, through the divine blessing, to bring them into the faith and love of Christ, and thus 'save their *souls* from death.'<sup>1</sup>

This paragraph of thanksgiving to God falls into two parts : first, an expression of gratitude for the past history of the Philippian church, which is contained in verses 3-5; secondly, an expression of gratitude for the assured hope the apostle has in regard to their future, which occupies the 6th and 7th verses. The 8th verse is a kind of appendix to the paragraph.

It is usually, as here, in thanksgivings that Paul uses the appropriating expression, '*my God*' The naturalness of this, in the acknowledgment by a Christian of blessings which have been bestowed on him personally, is obvious. Looked at in connection with the subject of the present thanksgiving, the progress of Christ's kingdom at Philippi, the '*my*' well illustrates the broadening, liberalizing influence of Christianity, its tendency to slay the selfishness of the human heart. Intense as is the happiness felt by every child of God in the knowledge that he himself 'has passed from death unto life ;' yet, if there be any whose joy in the gospel rests *exclusively*, or anything like exclusively, on the thought of its having become 'the power of God unto salvation' to them personally, they have not as yet learned more than the elements of the truth which the Holy Spirit teaches the saints. Growth towards the

<sup>1</sup> With the particulars of the illustrative case here referred to, the congregation to whom the lecture was delivered were familiar ; but for some who may read it a word of explanation may perhaps be desirable. After a terrible famine in Rajpootana a few years ago, several hundreds of destitute orphans were taken by the missionaries labouring in the district to their various stations, there to be cared for till they should be able to provide for themselves. Much interest was awakened in these poor children throughout the United Presbyterian Church, with which the mission is connected ; and many members assumed the responsibility of supporting particular orphans, adopting them in a measure.

'measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' is in nothing more marked than in increasing delight, and increasing gratitude as for a personal blessing, to see the advancement of the glory of the Saviour all around, through the quickening of dead souls and the ripening of Christians in piety. In the fact that God is leading others to know Him as their covenant God, the wise believer sees ground for always new thankfulness and joy that so gracious a God is *his* God. He knows that the widening of the range of blessing brings no diminution of individual blessing. To each Christian God is as fully and satisfactorily *his* God as if there were no others in the covenant.

'I thank my God,' says the apostle, '*upon every remembrance of you,*'—more exactly, 'on all my remembrance of you,'—an expression which may perhaps gather up, so to speak, into one head or sum the times when he is conscious of this feeling of gratitude, and may therefore be equivalent to 'upon every remembrance of you,' but appears much more naturally to mean, 'on the ground of all I remember regarding you.' He had still vividly before him 'the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals' to the Saviour. He remembered the sweet outflow of love from the 'opened heart' of Lydia, when 'she besought' him and his company, 'saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there,'—and that her warm and active affection represented the spirit of the believers generally. With this good beginning, he knew that their history since had on the whole accorded. He had heard, and on his occasional visits seen, that knowledge, humility, and self-discipline were found among the members of the church; that their life was governed by 'a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;' that they 'walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' Thus, 'on the ground of all his remembrance of them,' the apostle, their spiritual father, 'thanked his God.' Ah, my brethren, how rare in any age has been such a church! How sweet to the pastor must always be such a memory!

The 4th verse tells us the form in which Paul's thankfulness found expression,—in gladness of heart as he prayed for them: '*always, in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy.*' The force of these last words is a little obscured through the omission by our translators of an article, the exact rendering being '*making the request with joy;*' or, still more precisely, retaining, as in the original, the same word used in the first part of the clause, '*offering the prayer with joy.*'

The mode of expression assumes that the Philippians did not need to be informed that the apostle often presented special prayer to God for them. He tells them what was his state of feeling in these prayers; but the fact of the prayers being offered is taken as a matter of course. The responsibility which rests upon a minister with reference to the spiritual welfare of his people, and the affections which arise out of the relations and intercourse between him and them, cannot but lead every spiritually-minded minister to bear his flock often on his heart before God.

When, as in the case before us, a minister sees God's blessing plainly resting on his work, then his sense of gratitude impels him with peculiar power to prayer. The proper and healthful influence of gratitude to God for any gift is to send us to our knees to express our trust in Him for the time to come, and to ask yet larger proofs of His kindness. In our relations to human benefactors the case stands otherwise. Sincere thankfulness for the kindness of a friend may often reasonably and becomingly lead us to resolve that, because his goodness to us has already been so great, we shall abstain from asking anything of him in the future. But one grand end of God in all His gifts to His moral creatures is, that through the course of thought and feeling into which the gifts are fitted to lead them, there may be produced a spirit, ever deepening, of childlike dependence upon Him. 'I am the Lord thy God,' He says, 'which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' True Christian wisdom is to obey this

gracious command, and on mercies past to build up a sure hope of new and more wondrous mercies to come. ‘The Lord hath been mindful of us ; He will bless us.’ ‘I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.’

Prayer offered when thankfulness thus specially occupies the heart—‘calling upon the name of the Lord’ for further mercies, when ‘the cup of salvation,’ which He has bestowed, is felt to be even now in the hands of the petitioner—will evidently have *gladness* as its distinctive characteristic. This, accordingly, is what Paul points to as showing his thankfulness on the retrospect of the religious history of the Philippians,—the fact that he presents his petitions for them ‘*with joy*.’ We are all sometimes called on to ‘wrestle’ with God, like Jacob, in the night, and, with darkness all around, to ‘watch for the morning’ with weary hearts. But in the apostle’s prayers for the Philippians he felt himself in the light. He saw his Father’s face, with its smile of ineffable love. God had already shown mercy, and this in regard to the very matter on which his entreaty bore. His prayer, above all things, for his dear Philippians was, that they might ‘grow in grace.’ Now he knew that they had been ‘growing in grace.’ Was it not most reasonable that he should ‘make his request with joy’?

The 5th verse exhibits the ground of the apostle’s thankfulness and joy. It expands the mention which he has made of his ‘remembrance’ of the Philippians, specifying the fact respecting them which it gave him such pleasure to look back upon.<sup>1</sup> His gratitude and joy were ‘*for their fellowship in the gospel*’—rather, ‘with regard to the gospel’—‘*from the first day until now*.’

In the 1st verse we found Paul using the word ‘saints’ as

<sup>1</sup> As regards its precise connection with the rest of the sentence, this clause might be looked on as exactly parallel to ‘on all my remembrance of you,’ and as expressly intended to be an exposition of it. The mode of construction is the same in both. Considering the inartificial character of the apostle’s style, however, the immediate connection is perhaps rather with ‘joy.’ Practically, the force of the clause is the same, either way.

equivalent to ‘church.’ We have here another very suggestive expression. The Philippian church was, and it is perfectly plain that the apostle considers that every church which is at all satisfactorily to fulfil the purposes of its existence will be, a body of persons bound together in ‘fellowship with respect to the gospel,’ or ‘for the furtherance of the gospel.’ The church at Philippi was *an association for advancing the influence of the gospel.*

The ‘fellowship’ of these brethren was, first and fundamentally, *with Christ*. They had been brought, in the measure of their faith, into unity of view and unity of will with Him; and therefore with Him, guided by His wisdom and sustained by His strength, were exerting themselves in His cause. They had learned to regard sin in the light in which He regards it. Wherever and in whatever form it showed itself, in themselves or in others, they saw it to be exceedingly evil, utterly and only evil. By this oneness of view with their Lord they were naturally impelled to oneness, or ‘fellowship,’ of action. They felt it to be most reasonable that if He, to overthrow sin, gave Himself up to death, and now is ever pleading through His Spirit with gospel hearers, knocking at the door of their hearts, all who think with Him should join Him in His work of love.

In Him, too, they had ‘fellowship in relation to the gospel’ *with each other*. The advancement of each other’s piety and spiritual peace was with them an object of definite pursuit. They prayed for each other’s advancement, and, in their intercourse, were mutually helpful with regard to the concerns of the soul, as well as those of the outward life. They co-operated also for the *extension* of the gospel. Not merely did each in his own sphere endeavour, by consistency of character and by direct effort, to bring ‘them that were ignorant and out of the way’ into the light and holiness and joy of true religion, but they associated themselves in various ways for such effort. They remembered that the wise and loving Saviour had sent

forth His apostles and His seventy disciples ‘by two and two,’ for their mutual stimulus and support in missionary labour.

Still further, this ‘fellowship’ was *with all Christians*. They bore on their hearts before their Father all ‘the brotherhood,’ the whole ‘household of faith ;’ and, as opportunity served, they gave Christian brethren encouragement and aid, looking with especial interest to those who were actively engaged in labour for the gospel. To their friend Paul, for example, they had recently, as repeatedly in former years, sent such pecuniary help as their circumstances permitted. The noble veteran of gospel warfare, now in prison ‘for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ,’ had been greatly cheered by this proof of their love to him for the Master’s sake.

In speaking of their ‘fellowship regarding the gospel,’ he had no doubt in his mind all the forms of communion which have been mentioned ; and all his remembrances of the Philippians brought it up before his view, for its affection and energy had been seen ‘*from the first day until now*’.

In the next verse the apostle continues his statement of the ground of his ‘joy’ in praying for them, and of his thankfulness to God respecting them. ‘I can present my petition for your spiritual advancement with the brightness of full hope,’ he says, ‘*being confident of this very thing*, which is the object of my prayer, that *He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*’

Every work of God is ‘very good.’ With special intensity of significance is this attribute ascribed to His work of saving grace, in which He makes sinful men ‘good’ by enabling them to reflect His own image. The long and faithful continuance of the brethren at Philippi in their ‘fellowship with respect to the gospel,’ gave most convincing evidence that divine grace had ‘*begun*’ this supremely ‘*good work*’ in them ; and Paul believed that that same grace would still ‘*perform it*,’ ‘bring it to completeness.’ God does not do things by halves ; and all those who through the dealings of His Spirit are led

to give themselves to Christ, are through the continued influence of the Spirit sustained in faith and holiness unto full salvation. ‘The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.’ As certainly as the ‘inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,’ is ‘reserved in heaven’ for the saints, so certainly they ‘are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.’ ‘I give unto My sheep eternal life,’ said the Lord Jesus, ‘and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are One.’

Having the happy conviction, then, from all he knows of the Philippians, that not in name only, but in truth, they have given themselves to the Lord, Paul is confident that the ‘Author of their faith’ will be its ‘Finisher;’ that the ‘good work’ which has been ‘begun’ in them by divine grace, will be carried on ‘until the day of Jesus Christ.’ The Christian knows that death will be for him the gate of life, seeing that ‘to depart’ will be ‘to be with Christ.’ But, according to the teaching of Scripture everywhere, the body is essential to complete humanity. So long, therefore, as the spirits of the saints remain disembodied, their condition is imperfect, even though they enjoy the highest happiness of which a disembodied human spirit is susceptible. The time of their perfection in the fullest sense begins at the second coming of the Lord, when the pure spirit will be united again to what it will recognise as in some true sense the old companion of its earthly joys and sorrows, but now ‘fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.’ To that advent of the Lord in majesty, to bring the probationary history of our earth to a close, to subject His foes to utter overthrow, and to introduce His people into the fulness of eternal life, all imperfection for any of the elements of their nature for ever behind them,—to this sublime scene, as you know, Scripture continually directs our thoughts. In the representations of the divine Word, death, which we are

apt to keep so prominently before our minds, passes comparatively out of view, as but a stage in our progress towards the experiences of that great day. We should breathe a brighter and freer atmosphere, my brethren, if in this matter we followed the leadings of the Spirit more closely than we generally do. The first impulse of many of us, if we were expressing the thought of the verse before us, would be to write, ‘God will carry on the good work *till death*.’ If we ponder the matter carefully, we shall see that the apostle’s language reveals a soul less absorbed in the thought of self, and more occupied with that of the glory of the Saviour and the blessedness of the whole church, than ours,—a soul, therefore, which was more likely to ‘rejoice in the Lord alway.’

In considering the many precious assurances given in Scripture, that all who cordially accept Christ as their Saviour will certainly be saved, it is of the highest importance that we bear in mind the perfect compatibility with these assurances, and, indeed, the absolute necessity, of diligence, and watchfulness, and prayer, ‘to make our calling and election sure.’ The perseverance of the saints is a perseverance in faith and holiness. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s people secures for us success in our struggle with sin; but His teaching enables us to see in this no reason for carelessness and indolence, but a most powerful reason for diligence, seeing that the contest may be maintained with such assured hope. The children of God feel that no argument could by possibility be stronger than that which Paul exhibits elsewhere in this Epistle—‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.’

In the portion of this long and somewhat complicated paragraph, or sentence, which we have already examined, we have seen that the apostle thanks God on two grounds,—on account of his remembrances of the Philippians, and on account of the happy future which he can confidently anticipate for

them. He has given us, too, his reasons for the pleasure he felt both in the retrospect and the prospect. His thought may therefore be held as completely exhibited. But his delight in thinking of their history, and in telling them of his affection for them, is such, that his heart still dwells on the subject; and in the 7th verse he goes back again to speak of their character and of his feelings regarding them, expanding in an interesting way his previous statements. He says, '*Even as it is meet*—reasonable, due to you—for me to think this of you all.' How admirable a Christian society that of Philippi must have been, brethren, when the wise apostle, with ample opportunities of judging, could say expressly that he had valid reasons 'to think this'—to entertain confidently the very best hopes—'*of them all.*' Alas, how few ministers could venture safely even to approach such a statement regarding the spiritual condition of those under their care!

The ground on which rested the 'meetness' that Paul 'should think this of them,' was the abundant evidence he had seen of their Christian character. Instead, however, of the bare statement of this ground, 'because I have observed such satisfactory proof of your being Christians,' we have here a characteristically Pauline deviation from regularity in the form of expression. The same facts which have proved to him the piety of the Philippians have led him to become attached to them, to give them a warm place in his great loving heart. Now this thought comes rushing into the sentence in place of the cold, quiet statement that he knows their character. 'It is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as ye all are partakers of my grace'—or, 'as being all partakers with me of my grace.' You see that these words must all be taken together, and that the logical force of the 'because' is found in the last part; not in the simple 'I love you,' but in 'I love you as well-proved fellow-Christians.'

By some expositors the other words of the clause, which by our translators are attached to the latter part, are joined to the former,—thus, ‘I have you in my heart, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, as being all partakers of my grace ;’ that is, ‘Both in my prison and when actively engaged in preaching the gospel, I feel a warm affection for you, as being my fellow-Christians.’ The original will bear this connection of the words ; but it seems to me greatly inferior in point and force to that adopted in our version. Accepting the latter, therefore, as setting forth the meaning of the apostle, you observe that in these words he specifies the spheres in which the fellowship of the Philippians with him in divine favour and help, their being ‘partakers with him of God’s grace,’ had been seen. They had, like Paul, *laboured* for Christ, and also, like Paul, *suffered* for Him.

Very naturally in a letter from the prison, the ‘*bonds*’ come up first to the apostle’s mind. By the contribution which, through Epaphroditus, they had sent to the apostle, to alleviate the troubles of his imprisonment, they had practically evinced their sympathy—in the full sense of the word, their ‘fellow-feeling’—with the persecuted saint. They had suffered with him in heart, ‘remembering him that was in bonds, as bound with him.’ Such sympathy could come only from the teaching of divine ‘*grace*.’ But there had been among these brethren not merely sympathy with suffering Christians, but personal experience of suffering for the gospel. ‘Unto you it is given,’ says the apostle in the last verses of this chapter, ‘to suffer for Christ’s sake ; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.’ Can we recognise God’s ‘*grace*’ in such suffering ? By nature men can see in suffering only an evil, and therefore, if it be looked at in relation to God, only a manifestation of His anger. The Christian learns to take another view. In affliction of every kind he sees a most efficient form of gracious Fatherly discipline. Suffering directly for Christ the Divine Spirit enables him to count, in a special manner, a ‘*gift* of

grace.' Such is the very expression of Paul in the words quoted a moment ago, 'Unto you it is given *in grace*' (for the word in the original means this, being the verbal form of that employed in the passage before us) 'to suffer for Christ's sake.' The men whom a general, at the critical moment of a great battle, specially appoints to hold the key of his position, or whom, in the assault of a besieged city, he sends on a 'forlorn hope,' are, by his choice of them for peril and probable suffering, marked out as in his judgment 'the bravest of the brave.' Their comrades, even while rejoicing in their hearts, it may be, that the selection has left themselves out, feel that those on whom the choice has fallen are honoured. Similarly, is there not 'grace' shown in the choice made by the 'Captain of salvation,' when in His providence He calls this soldier of the cross, and that, to suffer or die under the standard? In the old persecuting times in our country, men who 'bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus,' in limbs crushed by the iron boot or torn by the rack,—looking back in after days upon the patience which the Saviour had given them amid their anguish, and the increase of spiritual wisdom and energy which had come through the trial to themselves, and to some extent also to others, could not but esteem the suffering for Christ as a 'gift of grace.' When under sentence of death, good Bishop Ridley wrote thus to his relatives: 'I warn you all, my beloved kinsfolk, that ye be not amazed or astonished at the kind of my departure or dissolution; for I assure you I think it the most honour that ever I was called unto in all my life. And therefore I thank God heartily for it, that it hath pleased Him to call me, of His great mercy, unto this high honour, to suffer death willingly for His sake and in His cause; unto the which honour He called the holy prophets, and His dearly beloved apostles, and His blessed chosen martyrs.' And when the end came, and Latimer and he were burned at the same stake,—whilst the persecutors could see only the flame which consumed the flesh, the faith of the martyrs could discern for themselves

a chariot of fire waiting to bear them home to their Lord, and for their country a fire of pious zeal lighted up, which all the arts of the wicked one should never be able to put out. There was great ‘grace’ there.

The Philippians had also, like Paul, been bold and successful ‘*in the defence and confirmation of the gospel;*’—that is, in maintaining its divine authority against gainsayers, and in establishing its influence over the minds and hearts of those who had in some degree accepted it. Each of them had felt himself called upon, in his sphere, and according to his abilities, to be a missionary of the cross. Their souls, rejoicing in the gracious invitation, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,’ had heard also, as an injunction following on the invitation, ‘And let him that heareth say, Come ;’ and ‘the love of Christ had constrained’ them to obey. They felt that the opportunity to work for their Saviour, by carrying the light of life to their fellow-men, was a precious ‘gift of grace ;’ and they found that, in the work, all needed grace to guide and support was bestowed upon them abundantly.

Alike as sufferers for Christ, then, and labourers for Him, they had proved themselves to have ‘like precious faith’ with Paul, and to be led and sustained by the same Spirit of glorious power who had enabled Paul to go through his wonderful evangelistic labours, and bear his extraordinary trials. Manifestly ‘partakers with him in his grace,’ recipients with him of the love and help of his Father in heaven, they were loved by him as brethren ; and he could not but offer his petitions for them ‘with joy,’ entertaining a firm persuasion that He who had ‘begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’

The 8th verse contains an earnest confirmation of what the apostle has just said. ‘Strong as my language is respecting my love for you, there is no exaggeration in it; *for God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*’

‘Record’ here means ‘witness.’ In the older English the

word had not its meaning limited to testimony committed to writing, as commonly now, but was applied to testimony generally, and sometimes, as here, to the witness who gave it.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the apostle, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, here makes a solemn appeal to the Searcher of hearts with respect to the truth of his assertion,—and the case is only one of several which occur in his Epistles,—shows, in opposition to the view of the members of the Society of Friends, and of some other small bodies of Christians, that our Lord's prohibition of swearing, given in the Sermon on the Mount, does not refer to all oaths, but merely to all of a particular kind. All appealing to God in a careless state of mind, on subjects of no moment, in forms or under circumstances calculated to weaken in ourselves and others reverence for God,—this is utterly hateful to Him. ‘The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.’ But whilst an oath on the lips of a man whose condition of heart is in no accordance with his solemn words of appeal, is a glaring insult to the Majesty of heaven; yet a reverential oath honours, not dishonours, God. The example of our Lord Himself, and His inspired servants, proves that, consistently with His law, an oath may be taken in a court of justice,—and now and again elsewhere, when a Christian, bearing fully in mind the weighty importance of his words, believes that a solemn appeal to God will advance the interests of Christ’s kingdom. The earnestness and solemnity of the apostle in the case before us are to be explained, no doubt, by his conviction that a lively impression, on the part of the Philippians, of his love for them, would give special force to his advices and pleadings and warnings throughout the letter.

‘God is my record,’ he says, ‘*how greatly I long after you*

<sup>1</sup> In the Authorized Version there are many instances of its use in the sense of ‘testimony,’ particularly in the phrase ‘bear record.’ In the sense of ‘a witness,’ which it has in the present passage, it occurs also in Job xvi. 19 and 2 Cor. i. 23.

all'—‘how eagerly I desire to be permitted, in God's providence, to see you again ; and, at the same time, how intense is my yearning for your prosperity, your growth in the beauty and strength and joy of religion.’ And this ‘longing’ was ‘*in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*’ Among the ancients, the imagined bodily seat of the affections, which with us is the heart, was the bowels. Thus we have frequently in Scripture such expressions as ‘bowels of mercies,’ ‘bowels of compassion,’—where we should say, ‘a heart full of mercy, full of compassion.’ Paul’s statement, then, is that his longing love for the Philippians was ‘*in the heart of Jesus Christ.*’ The expression is a remarkable one, very strong and startling. It shows us how real, and thorough, and lively, was the apostle’s conviction of the union of Christians to their Lord. By the teaching of the word of Christ, made vital through the quickening energy of the Spirit of Christ, the believer, in the measure of his faith, has oneness of mind and heart with the Saviour, judges as He judges, loves as He loves, desires as He desires. ‘*Christ liveth in the Christian,*’ for ‘he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit;’ and thus, in all holy emotion and affection in the followers of Christ, we see the action of His life and love. Thus the apostle’s longings were ‘*in the heart of Jesus Christ.*’

You see then, brethren, by immediate inference, that our calling as Christians is to be, every one of us, a revelation or word of Christ, an epistle of Christ, written in characters so large and fair as to be known and read of all men. If the union between the Lord and His people be so real and so intimate that, in as far as our faith is intelligent and lively, His spiritual life pervades us, and our affections are ‘*in His heart,*’ then plainly, seeing that ‘*out of the heart are the issues of life,*’ Christ-like beauty of character, Christ-like energy and patience, should be visible in every department of our conduct. As a matter of fact, then, does your life, does my life, truthfully represent the life of Christ? This is the practical question on

the subject for us. What impression of the Saviour's 'heart' is likely to be made on those around who are strangers to Him, by our lives, which, if our Christian profession mean anything, it declares to be 'issues' from His heart? Men hear of a vast hidden lake of purest water far up among the mountains. They judge by the streams whether the report is true. If, where they have been told that they will find a stream from the great lake, they come only on a dry channel; or, if there be water, find the water bitter,—what will their judgment of the lake be?

To no feature of character did our Lord Himself more expressly draw attention, as rightly exhibiting His spirit to the world, than to that so fully and beautifully displayed by the apostle in the passage before us,—love to the Christian brotherhood. 'This is My commandment,' He said, 'that ye love one another as I have loved you.' 'Hereby shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.' How is it with us, brethren, in this respect? We have often sat together at the table of the Lord, declaring our close union to each other, through our common union to Him,—declaring that 'we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.' Now, in daily life, what tender interest do we show in each other? Do we find and display happiness in each other's happiness, and sorrow in each other's sorrow? Are the poor and the sick of the brotherhood objects of our care? Are we really exerting ourselves, as God gives us opportunity, to strengthen the tempted among us, to guide the perplexed, to raise the fallen, to 'bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'? All of us, dear friends, will find much cause for deep abasement, if we honestly put to ourselves such questions as these. Are there not some of us to whom Paul's words in this verse regarding his love to the brotherhood—and that a love 'in the heart of Christ'—would be totally unintelligible, if they were to read them only by the light of their own personal experience?

## III.

## PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.'—PHIL. i. 9-11.

OF the paragraph extending from the 3d verse to the 8th, which is indeed one long and somewhat complicated sentence, the main statement, as we have seen, is that made at the beginning, that the apostle prayed for his Philippian converts with thankfulness and joy,—the grounds of these feelings being exhibited in the remainder. The short section to which we now come tells us what the particular petition was which, in the prayer referred to, he usually offered up for them. The spiritually-minded reader feels himself pass easily from the close of the previous section into this. The 'longing' of Christian love so naturally takes the form of prayer, that no connection can be conceived more legitimate and direct than this, 'I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ,' 'and this I pray.' And the Hearer of prayer 'satisfieth the longing soul.'

'This is my prayer, then,' says Paul, '*that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.*' Love he has already mentioned to be conspicuous in the Philippian church. Their fellowship with Christ, with each other, with all good men, for the advancement of the power of the gospel, yielded him the most exquisite delight. Now that this

love, already so ardent, may grow, may have every defect and disfigurement removed from it, and everything given to it which can increase its strength and beauty,—this is his chief petition to God for them. Thus the queenly position of Love among the graces is set before us. Knowledge and judgment, you see, in themselves so admirable, the apostle speaks of as merely her servants or possessions, in which it is desirable that she should ‘abound.’ Faith and hope are, in their degree, powerful and fair; but it is hers to wear the crown and sway the sceptre, theirs to lay tribute at her feet. Love is the grand sanctifying, ennobling, beautifying principle of the Christian soul. It is, in truth, itself the sum of moral excellence; for all forms of holy feeling and holy action are but various manifestations of love to God and to man. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law.’ ‘The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.’ ‘God is love,’ and therefore to be full of love is to be like God.

Now love to God, and the sincere and unselfish love to man, with which love to God is always associated, spring from *knowledge* of God, and of man’s real relations to God. It is impossible, consistently with the nature of things, that it should be otherwise. A heart which is in darkness, filled with grievous misconceptions of God and of happiness—and such is every human heart by nature—cannot love God, nor unselfishly love man. It is ‘faith,’ the intelligent and cordial belief of divine truth, that ‘worketh by love.’ The gospel of Jesus Christ exhibits to us the divine character in so winning an aspect, that when we thus see God we cannot but love Him, and with Him those who through His grace are in spirit like Him,—cannot but heartily sympathize too in His pitying love for the world. The Philippians, then, being distinguished by love, had of necessity no little Christian knowledge.

But growth is the law of spiritual life, as of natural. The new man in Christ has his infancy, his youth, his manhood.

And such is the mutual dependence of the elements of Christian character, that it is of the highest importance that *all* of them should grow. If one member of the new man be stunted in its development, then the whole body suffers. When ‘the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love,’—it is then that full spiritual health reigns.

It is specially important that *knowledge* grow; for this, the knowledge of divine truth, received through faith, is the root from which all Christian character springs. Plainly, therefore, the more widely and deeply that the root sends out its tendrils, the more fully that it draws from the soil of truth the nourishment which is fitted to sustain the trunk and the branches, ever the stronger and healthier is the tree, able the more triumphantly to endure the blasts of temptation, and continually the lovelier in leaf and the richer in fruit. God, then, would have His people advance in Christian knowledge. He would have us not always to be content with the food of babes, who, whilst in a measure knowing the truth, are yet ‘unskilful in the word of righteousness;’ but to seek the ‘strong meat, which belongeth to them that are of full age.’ We are to ‘follow on to know the Lord,’—to seek that the light which the Spirit has kindled in our souls may wax brighter and brighter. Ignorance is not, as has sometimes been foolishly and wickedly taught, the mother of devotion, but the mother of sin and superstition. Real living Bible Christianity has nothing to conceal. She says to all forms of investigation and inquiry, as Philip said to doubting Nathanael, ‘Come and see.’ The prayer of the apostle, then, is that the love of his dear converts at Philippi may, in ever-increasing abundance, possess knowledge as its basis, root, nourishment.

That love should be accompanied by large knowledge is of the highest importance also, in order that her impulses may

be wisely directed,—that she may work towards the best ends by the most judicious means. Blind love fails in any sphere of action. A true-hearted boy, who finds his mother suddenly made a widow, and his young sisters and himself fatherless, and sees want coming on with fierce visage and rapid steps like an armed man, is impelled by his love to the dear ones around him to rush at once into the midst of the struggle of life ; and in the place, and with the weapons, of a full-grown man, give the enemy battle. The love and the zeal are most beautiful and admirable, yet those among the onlookers who have experience of the world's difficulties, cannot but fear that the young hero may soon be brought home from the battle-field wounded and bleeding and despondent. He needs training. His love must have the knowledge of men and things along with it, before it is likely to reach its aim. So with Christian love generally, going forth to do work for God and man in the world. Having talents entrusted to us by God to lay out for Him, we must strive—by the study of our powers and opportunities, temptations and dangers ; by the consideration of present circumstances, and by cautious forecast ; by carefully looking in and out, and at all things in the light of God's word—to become wise and successful spiritual traffickers.<sup>1</sup> Like those men of Issachar who came to Hebron to make David king, we should ‘have understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,’—thus not having knowledge merely, but knowledge fused into wisdom. We should ‘walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, understanding what the will of the Lord is.’ For thus directing a Christian's love to God and man into the best channels, it is evident that knowledge beyond, as well as within, the sphere of what, in the ordinary limited sense, is called *religious* truth, is likely to be of no small service. The man who has most fully used his opportunities of obtaining general as well as biblical knowledge,

<sup>1</sup> According to a precept ascribed by early writers to our Lord, γίνεσθε τραπεζῖται δόκιμοι, ‘Be ye approved money-changers.’

and in whom true Christian wisdom, contemplating all the knowledge in its relations to God and the gospel, thus transmutes it *all* into religious knowledge,—this man, if love be strong within him, is the most likely to leave the mark of his love deep and broad on the sphere which God has given him.

I have spoken of knowledge as being both the support and the director of love. That this latter relation is chiefly in the apostle's mind here, is shown by the words he adds, '*and in all judgment*',—that is, '*in all moral perception*', '*in an accurate and delicate moral discernment*, suited for all the phases and emergencies of life.' It is possible to know general principles in a measure, and yet to fail often to see their true and full application, as particular cases present themselves. That the Philippians may have this faculty, is what the apostle now entreats of God.

His exact meaning is explained by his next words, '*that ye may approve things that are excellent*' This clause does not contain another petition co-ordinate with that of the 9th verse, as might very naturally be supposed from the English version; but sets forth the object for which growth in knowledge and judgment is entreated,—the introductory '*that*' meaning '*to the end that*' From a little ambiguity in two of the words employed by the apostle, the clause may mean either, as our translators have given it in the text, '*that ye may approve things that are excellent*'; or, as they have given it in the margin, '*that ye may try things that differ*'. It is of no great moment which of these renderings be adopted, because, as you will see, the approval of the excellent is simply the spiritual act to which the trying of the things that differ is intended to lead. On the whole, the marginal translation seems to me more pointed and forcible, and on various grounds preferable.

The apostle's prayer then is, '*that the love of the Philippians may be accompanied with abundant knowledge, and with all delicate moral perception, to the end that they may try or test*

—so as to distinguish—things which differ.' His reference in '*things which differ*' is not to virtue and vice, the service of God and the service of Satan. With respect to these, the Philippians had decided clearly and irrevocably long ago, for they were already Christians, eminent Christians. They shunned darkness, and loved light. In this clause of his prayer, Paul has in his mind, I apprehend, the faculty of distinguishing Christian virtue from all counterfeits; of seeing, in an apparent conflict of duties, what present duty really is; of discerning where excess begins in that which, up to a certain point, is innocent or useful; of deciding accurately which of two ways of pursuing Christian work is the better; of avoiding moral pitfalls, however carefully covered over; of habitually saying and doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, and thus steadily growing ever liker Christ.

In the case of the 'new man in Christ,' with respect to spiritual discrimination, just as in the ordinary life of man, it is 'by reason of use' that we 'have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' When offered food, a child takes palatableness only into account, and will as readily eat, if it be pleasant to the taste, what is unwholesome or even poisonous, as what is most nourishing. The power of discriminating, so as 'to refuse the evil and choose the good,' comes by experience. Now the skill which experience, to a great extent unsought, thus gives in the physical sphere, must, in the spiritual, be sought by definite pursuit. Observation and reading, the reading particularly of the biographies of eminent Christians—and especially the Bible biographies, which have an absolute truthfulness seldom even approached in others,—these will supply materials, the thoughtful and prayerful consideration of which will produce acuteness of moral perception. There are Christians in whom natural delicacy of feeling and accuracy of judgment, fostered by various helpful surroundings, give, from the very beginning of their religious life, a faculty of spiritual discrimination which acts almost with the readiness and cer-

tainty of an instinct. These are rare ; but no believer, who is willing to be observant and thoughtful and prayerful, will fail to grow ever more acute in moral judgment. Let us cultivate this faculty with diligence, my brethren. The degree in which it is possessed determines very largely the beauty of a Christian's character, and the breadth and depth and permanence of his influence for good.

To this point the apostle directs attention in his next words. 'My desire for your growth in delicacy of moral perception,' he says, 'is mainly with a view to a further object, to the intent that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ.' All knowledge and wisdom in regard to religion are fitted to exert practical power over the affections and life, and fail of their grand use where this is wanting. 'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves ; for whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.' Now if a man have the faculty of sound moral discrimination, and permit his clear views to act legitimately on his heart, the whole man will evidently be '*sincere*,' '*pure*,' '*free from mixture*' or contamination with what is base ; so that, according to what is not improbably the primitive sense of the word used in the original, he might with safety be '*tested in bright sunlight*.' His soul, regulated by the absolutely harmonious will of God, will itself be free from all discords. He will cherish '*singleness of heart, fearing God*.' To maintain any approach to a spirit like this, needs, in such a world as that we live in, the exercise of intense and constant vigilance. Some of us have seen the glorious blue of the Rhone, as it leaves the Lake of Geneva. A little way down, we have seen the Arve, loaded with mud, rush into the same channel. We have watched the two streams flow side by side, each in its own division of the channel, as if the pure could not permit the impure to mingle with it. But the earthly insinuates itself fully at last, and the river flows on,

its colour still blue, but sadly changed from the heaven-like blue of its beginnings. Have we not often mourned, brethren, to see something like this in a Christian life—the hue of earth spreading itself lamentably over the hue of heaven? Faith in Christ brings the water from ‘the upper springs,’ to make the stream pure and sweet; but the muddy and bitter water from the world ever presses in, to mar and pollute. But ‘love, abounding in knowledge and in all judgment,’ can keep the stream clear, so that it reveals itself truly as a branch of the ‘pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’

A Christian whose soul is, in any considerable measure, ‘sincere,’ through accurate and influential perceptions of moral right and wrong, will evidently, in the degree of his ‘sincerity,’ be in his life ‘without offence’—that is to say, will not ‘stumble’ in religion; for at the time our version of the Bible was made, ‘offend’ and ‘offence’ meant, respectively, ‘stumble,’ and ‘stumbling’ or ‘stumbling-block.’ The man of ‘sincere’ heart will maintain a steady Christian walk; and thus his influence will in nothing tend to produce unsteadiness, spiritual inconsistency, in other believers; but will always stimulate them to ‘adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour’ by a blameless and useful life.<sup>1</sup> In this way the aims of love, the grace from the mention of which the thoughts of the apostle in the paragraph took their start, and which he regards as rightful ruler of the nature, will be furthered on every side.

And all this ‘till’—or rather ‘against,’ ‘in view of’—‘*the day of Christ*,’—‘keeping its solemnities much before the mind.’ The fact that this is the second reference we have met with in the first ten verses of the Epistle to the great day of Christ’s second advent, shows impressively with what vividness and

<sup>1</sup> The original word rendered ‘without offence’ may mean also ‘without causing offence,’ or ‘stumbling,’ in others. The former meaning is, beyond question, I think, that primarily intended by the apostle here; but, of course, the thought of influence on others naturally suggests itself also.

constancy it was present to the thoughts of the apostle. The coming of the Lord was to him no mere article of an orthodox creed, no mere necessary constituent of a complete confession of faith. It stood out before him as intensely real. The thought of it coloured his whole being. Glowing love to Him who, in His first coming, had suffered and died, that even for one who was ‘a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious,’ there might be saving mercy; and a vivid realizing faith in His second coming, His glorious appearing to raise the dead, and judge the world, and introduce His people into the full blessedness and glory of salvation,—these were plainly the moving springs of this great Christian’s life. He ‘looked’ with the intensest yearnings of his strong soul ‘for that blessed hope;’ and those eager longings gave ardour to his prayers and efforts, both for himself and his converts, that ‘their whole spirit and soul and body might be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ You and I, my friends, if we truly believe the testimony of God, have similar anticipations with the apostle. We, too, expect to see ‘the judgment set, and the books opened.’ According to our profession, we have ‘turned to God to serve Him, and to wait for His Son from heaven.’ ‘Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.’

In the apostle’s description of the character which, in his prayer, he asks God to produce in the Philippians through increasing delicacy of spiritual perception, he has mentioned ‘sincerity’ or ‘purity’ of soul, and its legitimate issue in the life, a consistent Christian course, free from stumbling and from anything fitted to be a stumbling-block to others. Something more has yet to be said. Not merely does he desire to see them ‘without offence,’ but distinguished growingly by Christian activity and devotedness, ‘*being filled with the fruits;*’ or, according to a more approved reading, ‘*fruit;*’ ‘*of righteousness.*’ ‘Righteousness’ here may designate either holiness

of heart or holiness of life. If the former be the meaning, then the sense of the whole phrase, '*the fruit of righteousness*', is, 'the fruit (holiness of life) which springs from righteousness,' 'righteousness' being regarded as the root or tree. If the other be the meaning, then the sense is, 'the fruit which is, consists in, righteousness,'—piety of soul being at once naturally thought of as the root or tree. The force of the passage is obviously quite the same either way, the difference having reference merely to the mode of conceiving the figure. The 'fruit' spoken of is seen in lives marked by holy love and energy and patience:

With such fruit the apostle desires to see the Philippians '*filled*,' laden on every bough. He would have them impelled by the mercies of God to 'present their bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God,' feeling this to be their 'reasonable service.' He longed to see them, in every department of their lives, manifestly 'transformed by the renewing of their minds,'—'*hungering and thirsting after righteousness*,'—urged by the sweet constraint of the love of Christ to 'give all diligence to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity.' In looking for an example illustrative of the meaning of this clause of the apostle's prayer, the Philippians, I doubt not, would think, next to the life of the Lord Jesus, of the life of Paul himself. As they glanced back over his history, and saw him 'posting o'er land and ocean without rest,' thirsting to carry the glad tidings of salvation to poor sinners of the Gentiles, until, 'by the power of the Spirit of God, from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of Christ;' as they recalled how devotedly he followed in the footsteps of his Master, earnest, prayerful, patient, loving, 'becoming all things to all men, that by all means he might save some;' as they thought of him in his present circumstances, now 'such an one as Paul the aged,'

a prisoner, and uncertain whether his imprisonment might not end in a cruel death, yet contented and cheerful, labouring diligently for Christ in the ways open to him, encouraging the brethren in Rome, and writing letters of comfort and instruction to the churches he had founded,—they felt that they knew what ‘to be filled with the fruit of righteousness’ meant.

‘The fruit of righteousness’ can be produced only through the gracious operation of God. The tendency of our fallen nature, left to itself, is to depart ever further from the production of good fruit. All the mere earthly influences of every kind, material, intellectual, and moral, which a creature like man, in a state of depravity, could conceive of as likely to give him advancement, have in turn, or unitedly, been brought into play in the history of the world ; and, so far as regards moral and spiritual elevation, the result of them all, left to themselves, has always been a total failure. It is evident, then, that special heavenly influences are needed. ‘The fruit of righteousness’ is indeed expressly called by the apostle elsewhere ‘the fruit of the Spirit,’ whose help is given to us, as he states here, ‘*by Jesus Christ.*’ Only through the Lord’s mediation are any of the treasures of salvation bestowed upon us.

The apostle appends ‘unto the glory and praise of God.’ This may be connected specially with the statement that ‘the fruit of righteousness is by Jesus Christ,’ or generally with the whole prayer ; the latter part, ‘that ye may be sincere, and without offence, filled with the fruit of righteousness,’ being, one may suppose, as nearest, most prominent in the writer’s mind. This latter connection is perhaps the preferable ; but obviously the sense is substantially the same either way.

The grand ultimate purpose of all God’s doings, the end in which is summed up all good, is ‘the praise of His glory,’ the manifestation of His own infinite excellence. No other adequate end, indeed, can be imagined. The sublimest revelation made of the glory of God, is seen in His work of grace through the incarnation and sufferings and mediatorial reign of

His Son. Now the chief element in the salvation which God offers us in Christ is holiness, likeness in character to Himself. The Lord ‘gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’ Plainly, then, the measure in which Christians are ‘sincere and without offence, being filled with the fruit of righteousness,’ will be the measure in which in them the ‘glory’ of divine grace is made manifest.

‘Praise,’ which the apostle adds to ‘glory,’ designates the recognition and acknowledgment of the glory. The glory of God is revealed, whether men open their eyes to see it or not. But the highest life of moral creatures depends on their recognition of this glory; and therefore over growing recognition, which means growing life, growing holiness, growing spiritual beauty, our loving Father rejoices.

The aim of God in His dealings with us, then, is His own ‘glory and praise.’ His working within us is to produce by His Spirit, through the faith of the gospel of His Son, such happiness and such loveliness of character as shall clearly evince His love and wisdom and power, and bring men generally to recognise His ineffable excellence, and, by their ‘knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent,’ enter into ‘eternal life.’ His people, having, in the measure of the intelligence and liveliness of their faith, oneness of thought and will with their heavenly Father, learn to rejoice supremely in recognising and seeing the recognition of His perfections, and to pray and labour with definite aim for the widening and deepening of such recognition. But this attainment is not reached at once. The heart, narrowed by sin, has first to be ‘enlarged’ by the influence of the Divine Spirit, through the training of religion, before there is full room for affections and longings so sublime. Of the young believer’s spiritual happiness the most prominent element is joy simply that he is saved; of the eminently mature Christian’s, that his salvation is ‘to the praise of the glory of God’s grace.’

## IV.

## THE GOSPEL IN ROME.

'But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.'—PHIL. i. 12-18.

THE apostle now, with the freedom of style belonging to a friendly letter, passes away to a new subject. He proceeds to give the Philippians some news regarding the effect of his imprisonment upon the progress of the gospel in Rome, and his feelings in connection with the state of things which he describes. In the communication brought to him from the church of Philippi by Epaphroditus, they had expressed, no doubt, as was natural, besides warm sympathy with him in his sufferings, anxiety also respecting his prospects, and fear lest, through his being in bonds, the work of Christ in the metropolis of the world should in various ways be seriously obstructed. Being enlightened Christians, they knew that the trouble which, in the providential arrangements of God, had come upon the apostle, was good for him, and would in its ultimate issues be for the divine glory; but they might reasonably enough doubt whether its immediate result would not be

to hinder the growth of the church. Not merely was there a clog on the freedom of movement of the great missionary himself; but it might easily be supposed that his being under persecution would seriously dispirit the Roman Christians, and prevent them from engaging vigorously in work for the Saviour. But Paul tells them in the paragraph before us that it was not so. ‘To relieve your anxiety,’ he says, ‘and to deepen your conviction that Jesus is Head over all things to the church, which is His body,—so that the gates of hell shall certainly not prevail against it,—*I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel than unto the obstruction of it.*’

The first result of God’s gracious intervention to ‘make the wrath of man’ in this matter ‘praise Him,’ was that the cause of Paul’s imprisonment became extensively known,—‘so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in the palace, and in all other places.’ The original word rendered ‘palace’ is one employed with a considerable variety of meaning, and its exact force here is somewhat doubtful. The view of the meaning adopted by our translators, in common with many other interpreters—‘palace,’ or, as it is given in the margin, ‘Cæsar’s court’—is to some extent supported by the salutation at the close of the Epistle, sent from ‘them that are of Cæsar’s household.’ To most modern expositors of the Epistle, however, it seems more probable that in the passage before us the word denotes the camp of the Emperor’s body-guard,—a brigade or rather small army, known by the name of the Praetorian Cohorts, which was constituted by the Emperor Augustus. By his successor Tiberius, a large camp was constructed for them on the north of the city, where the main body was permanently stationed. A certain portion, however, were always on duty around the emperor’s person, and for them there were barracks connected with the palace, which was within the city, on the Palatine Hill. It belonged to the official duty of the commander of the Praetorian guards to keep in custody all accused persons

who were to be tried before the emperor himself; and accordingly when Paul, having appealed from the provincial governor Festus to Cæsar, was taken to Rome, it was into the hands of this great officer that he was given over by the centurion Julius, who had brought him from Palestine. The commander, influenced, no doubt, by the report which Julius gave respecting his prisoner, granted Paul considerable liberty. Still, in accordance with regular Roman usage, he was night and day chained by the arm to the arm of a soldier.

The words in the verse before us may be taken to indicate, in a general way, where the apostle lived at Rome, seeing that in the neighbourhood of his place of abode his bonds would naturally become most ‘manifest.’ By some—our translators apparently among the number, from their rendering here—it has been supposed that he was quartered in the barracks or small camp adjoining the palace. But Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles (xxviii. 30), tells us that Paul ‘dwelt in his own hired house.’ Now it appears exceedingly improbable that such a house could be obtained within the enclosures of the imperial palace. Or, if we suppose the date of this Epistle to be later than the time covered by the reference in Acts, and that the apostle was no longer in a house of his own, but in more rigid confinement, still it seems very unlikely that a prisoner to whom in the eyes of the Roman officials no particular distinction could attach, should be lodged in the palace buildings. The same difficulties do not lie in the way of our supposing his place of residence to have been within the great Prætorian camp outside the city. There may have been houses included within it which could be rented. There, in all likelihood, I think, or at least in that neighbourhood, he lived. The immediate reference in the words before us, however, may be, and, as it seems to me, from the ordinary use of the term employed in the original, really is, not local but personal. They designate, I think, neither a palace nor a camp, but mean ‘in all the Prætorian brigade.’

Among the Prætorian guards, then, Paul's '*bonds in Christ were manifest*,'—or, more exactly, '*his bonds were manifest in Christ*,' '*were well known as being in connection with Christ*.' '*In connection with Christ*' at least—and this most vaguely and variously conceived—was, no doubt, the form in which the cause of his imprisonment would present itself to many of those of whom he speaks; yet the full and precious force of the '*in Christ*' is to be held fast here, as elsewhere; for the apostle exhibits the matter in the aspect in which he himself delighted to view it. It was through his union to Christ that the bonds were on his limbs,—badges, therefore, not of slavery, but of true freedom. It was because, being '*in Christ*', he was prompted by the Spirit of Christ to earnest effort for the extension of the gospel, that he had been imprisoned; and it was because, being '*in Christ*', he was sustained by the Spirit of Christ, that the bonds were borne with patience, and became instruments of glorifying God. Paul felt that in this '*in Christ*' were summed up all the forms of the connection between the Saviour and His people, all the relations borne to Him by holy hearts and holy deeds.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that a considerable number of the Prætorian soldiers felt an interest in the apostle from the very beginning of his residence in Rome. It can hardly be doubted that, in conversation with officers of the brigade, Julius, whom all that is told us of him shows to have been a man of candour and generosity, spoke of his singular prisoner, his evident intellectual power, his pure and lofty character, his prophecies during the voyage, and his miracles during the stay at Malta.<sup>1</sup> The other prisoners, too, who had been in the ship, could scarcely fail to talk of their extraordinary com-

<sup>1</sup> There is probability in the view maintained by Wieseler, Howson, and Alford, that the '*Augustan Cohort*,' or, as the Authorized Version has it, '*Augustus' band*,' in which Julius was a centurion (Acts xxvii. 1), was a portion of the Prætorian Brigade. In this case, we may suppose that on his arrival in Rome he was quartered in the camp of the Prætorians, and thus had frequent opportunities of intercourse with the other officers.

panion in such a way as to direct special attention to him. Then during the two years or more in which the apostle lived among the Praetorians,—whatever was the particular system according to which the soldiers relieved each other in the special charge of the prisoners,—a great number must certainly have been brought more or less into contact with him, and some, probably many, must have had times of the very closest companionship. Under these circumstances, the influence of his character and wisdom could not but become deeply and widely felt throughout the brigade. His life among them was one on which so strong a light beat that nothing could well remain concealed; he had no privacy, no solitude, day or night, except that solitude which every Christian heart can make for itself, even in the midst of bustle, for communion with God. Studying him by this light, seeing his purity, his patience, his gentleness and kindness, the soldiers felt that assuredly he was no criminal in the ordinary sense of the word, and that no charge could for a moment be sustained against him, except the charge of sincerely, lovingly, constantly, unflinchingly, serving that unseen God, that unseen Saviour, to whom he so frequently prayed. If that was a fault, no soldier who ever for a single day or a single night was linked to Paul's arm could doubt that he was guilty there. His bonds, then, were 'manifest to be in Christ.'

'*In all other places*,' also, the true cause of his imprisonment was manifest, or rather, 'to all the rest,' that is, to all that knew anything of the imprisonment. To every one who was aware of the fact that Paul was in bonds, it was plain that these were 'in Christ.'

The Philippians, then, might reasonably cast off a great part of their burden of anxiety respecting the apostle's position. He was a prisoner indeed, but the real cause of his imprisonment was widely and well understood; and thus, in various ways, honour was brought to the gospel, and to the Saviour whom the gospel reveals.

But, further, ‘many’—more exactly, ‘most’—‘of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.’

It seems fair to infer, from the way in which the apostle makes this statement, that in the early church the regular state of things in a healthy congregation was that every member, according to his opportunities, ‘spake the word of the Lord.’ Then, as now, for obvious reasons, there were ministers, persons specially charged with the duty of ‘labouring in the word and doctrine.’ But here, you observe, Paul says that ‘most of the brethren’—that is, undoubtedly, according to the usual meaning of the word in the New Testament, ‘most of the Christians,’ ‘most of the members of the church’—were engaged in evangelistic work; and, plainly, his only regret is that he had to say ‘most,’ not ‘all.’ In any person who obtained a cure of a bodily disease commonly counted incurable, you would think it the dictate of natural humanity to bring the name of the physician or of the medicine as widely as possible before the attention of all persons similarly diseased; so, surely, it is, for the new man in Christ, at once obviously dutiful and most natural, to publish the glorious power and grace of the Divine Physician of souls among all who do not know Him. In heathen countries, where missionaries are labouring, this is the general and immediate effect of conversion to God. The young believer tells eagerly and everywhere, ‘what a dear Saviour he has found.’ In a country like ours the conditions of the question of duty, so far as regards private conversations on religion, are considerably different, through the commonness of a Christian profession. Among a large proportion of our people, what is needed in religion is not news, but advice; not glad tidings of a Deliverer hitherto unheard of, but solemn and earnest pleading regarding the importance of accepting a salvation known about since childhood. Now this fact, of necessity, to some extent limits a Christian’s sphere of evangelistic effort, because news of interest will be welcomed from

any one, advice on matters of moment and delicacy only from a friend, and not always from him. It is true that you may believe even many a professing Christian to have been so neglectful of his privileges as to need news of Christ; yet if this be assumed, and the assumption acted upon, there is great risk that, through wounded sensitiveness, a strong barrier of pride and obstinacy may at once be thrown up against the power of the truth. Still it is manifestly the duty of all Christians, wherever it is within their power, to 'speak the word' to those who are, clearly and admittedly, 'ignorant and out of the way,' and to others, wherever their relations to them and their opportunities allow. But, alas! my brethren, that same state of things to which I have already alluded, the commonness, and, indeed, all but universality, in our country, in certain classes of society, of a Christian profession, so that great multitudes call themselves Christians who give little evidence of genuine change of heart, deadens the sense of duty even among true believers. The tendency of 'the law of sin in the members' is ever to make us satisfied with being on no lower level of Christian activity than our professing Christian neighbours. Ah, how different from His spirit, whose 'meat it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work!'

The church of Christ in Rome, regarding the spiritual energy of which Paul here gives information to the Philippians, had been in existence probably for many years. Among the 'Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven,' who were in Jerusalem at the ever-memorable Pentecost, and who heard the glad tidings from the lips of the apostles, we find mention made of 'strangers of Rome.' There is every likelihood that some of these were convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, and that on their return home they formed themselves into an association for Christian worship and work. Paul's great Epistle to this church was written about three years before his arrival among them; and at that time, as we learn from him, their 'faith was spoken of throughout the whole world.' Most

of these Christians were, no doubt, poor men, and thus, amid the teeming population of Rome, the ‘speaking of the word of God,’ to which their faith prompted, was probably in most cases altogether unnoticed by the officers of the government; or, if noticed, was regarded with contempt. Still, it would seem that, knowing how fierce a flame of jealousy and anger might at any moment, through some casual circumstance, be lighted up in the hearts of their despotic and suspicious rulers, they had carried on their work with not a little fear. But now, as Paul tells the Philippians, ‘the brethren *waxed bold through his bonds.*’ By his sufferings for preaching the word they had their boldness in preaching it increased. This paradox is simply a special form of what is constantly seen in the church. In the Christian, when called to suffer, ‘tribulation,’ which to the unregenerate man appears simply a destroyer of joy, ‘worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, *hope.*’ The observation, too, of suffering well endured by other believers, strengthens faith. Thus, through the sight of Paul in bonds for serving Christ, and tranquil under his bonds, the brethren in Rome had their delight in God, and their devotedness to Him, increased. The faith which saw in Paul’s chains evidences of a moral kingliness, a kingliness which would by and by have its glory manifested, seeing that ‘it is a faithful saying, If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him,—faith like this among the Roman Christians could not but spur them on to labour manfully and unflinchingly in Christ’s service. Thus it comes that ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.’ Not only are the actual sufferers personally ennobled in spirit through their sufferings; but others, too, are enlightened, quickened, strengthened. In the persecution which arose after the murder of Stephen, ‘they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.’ Through persecution it was that warm religious life was maintained in the Piedmontese valleys; so that when in our own day, in the providence of God, Italy was opened to the gospel, the Waldenses

were ready to enter in rejoicingly and proclaim the truth. And to the long and intensely cruel persecution of the Christians in Madagascar is largely due, according to the view of those who have had the best opportunities of judging, the marvellous progress of the cause of Christ in that island, both during the dark days and since. ‘Out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness.’

The secret of all this is told in the little phrase of the apostle, ‘*in the Lord*.’ This seems to belong to the words which follow, rather than, as our translators have supposed, to that which precedes,—his statement being, therefore, that ‘through his bonds the brethren waxed confident in the Lord.’ The natural man, the man who himself is ‘out of Christ,’ can see, as he looks at Paul in his imprisonment, only the chains, and the possibilities of a violent death. But the man who is ‘in Christ,’ however clearly he may see these, sees also the spiritual grandeur of work for the Saviour, such as had brought the apostle into bonds,—the spiritual grandeur of suffering for the Saviour, if such be His appointment,—the sympathy of Christ with the sufferer, and the serenity of heart which the sense of that sympathy brings,—the growth of religious strength and beauty through the affliction,—and the glorious issue of all, when ‘to him that overcometh Jesus gives to sit with Him in His throne, even as He also overcame and is set down with His Father in His throne.’ Is it wonderful that the man who, with the eye of faith, sees these things, should ‘wax confident in the Lord by the apostle’s bonds,’ and be ‘much more bold to speak the word without fear’?

But the persons who were preaching the gospel in Rome, and this to some extent under a stimulus given by their knowledge of Paul’s position, were yet under the influence of strangely divergent motives. ‘*Some, indeed,*’ the apostle says, referring here evidently to persons distinct from the ‘brethren’ mentioned in the 14th verse, ‘*preach Christ even, strange as it may seem, of envy and strife, and (rather “but”) some also of*

*good will,—from hearty interest in my happiness, and in the progress of the Saviour's kingdom. The one party preach Christ of contention (more exactly “factiousness”), not sincerely,—not with purity or singleness of purpose,—supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other party of love to me, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel—that I am Christ's apostle, commissioned to maintain His truth against all gainsaying.’*

Those last spoken of are plainly the ‘brethren’ before mentioned. They loved the apostle, both for his Master's sake and for his own. They knew that he was ‘set for the defence of the gospel,’ and that his heart was in his great work. They saw, therefore, that the evidence of sympathy with him which would yield him the richest comfort, would be effort to extend the knowledge and power of the truth so dear to him. Admiration and affection for the honoured ‘prisoner of Jesus Christ’ thus acted as a spur to them in the work to which gratitude and love to their Saviour of itself impelled them. We understand this party and their motives without any difficulty.

But who were the others? We find that throughout the whole of Paul's apostolic course his most virulent opponents were Jews. It is most probable therefore that the persons here referred to, belonged to his ‘kinsmen according to the flesh.’ They were professedly *Christian* Jews, too; for unbelievers would in no sense have ‘preached Christ,’ as it is said by the apostle that these did. The unbelieving Jews hated Paul, who, in early life regarded as an eminent defender of Pharisaic Judaism, had now for many years, and with extraordinary energy and success, ‘preached the faith which once he destroyed;’ but they hated Jesus of Nazareth more. Paul's bitterest and most unwearied antagonists were Jews who had embraced Christianity, but, understanding the spirit of their new religion only very imperfectly, believed that all Christians should observe the rite of circumcision and the other ordinances

of the old covenant. To this class, we may reasonably suppose, belonged the men whom Paul here describes to the Philippians as ‘preaching Christ through envy and factiousness.’ The doctrines of some of these Judaizing teachers were exceedingly, and indeed ruinously, erroneous. Of those, for example, who visited the Galatians, the errors were such that, as it would seem from the tone of the apostle’s letter to that church, persons who fully admitted the false teaching ‘frustrated the grace of God,’ placing themselves in a position in which ‘Christ profited them nothing,’ ‘was of no effect to them,’ ‘was dead in vain.’ It may be questioned whether Paul would have said of such teachers as these, that they ‘preached Christ’ at all; and it can hardly be even questioned, that under no circumstances would he have ‘rejoiced’ in their preaching, as in the 18th verse he says he did in the preaching even of his opponents at Rome. But, no doubt, there were other Judaizers in the early church, of views less divergent from truth, but who also disliked Paul keenly, in consequence of the steady and uncompromising opposition he maintained at all times to the slightest infringement of the full spiritual liberty of believers. Such, perhaps, were those in the church at Corinth, whose motto or watchword was ‘I am of Cephas.’ It appears to me most likely that the persons of whom the apostle speaks in the passage before us were, mainly at least, of this class,—Christian Jews, who had an imperfect view of ‘the liberty wherewith Christ hath made His people free,’ but whose teaching diverged less from pure Christian doctrine than that of some others. Whatever their doctrines, however, they were men of whose hearts the gospel had but slightly laid hold. The apostle’s language respecting them need not be taken to mean that, in his judgment, they were all wholly destitute of real love to Christ; but they certainly were, at the least, deplorably misguided.

The hatred of these teachers to Paul, and even the mode in which it was on the present occasion displayed, will not

appear strange to careful students of history. Calvin, in his comment on this passage, remarks, ‘Paul certainly says nothing here which I have not myself experienced.’ It was natural that Jews, members of a nation which had for many centuries enjoyed singular proofs of the divine favour, should, even when they became Christians, be most reluctant to admit the thought that the religion introduced by Jesus—Himself one of their race, and the Messiah promised to their fathers and longed for by their fathers as ‘the Consolation of Israel’—set aside the ordinances of the Old Economy, and everything which could suggest any superiority before God of the Jew over the Gentile. When we think of this, and when we remember how deplorably common bitter hatreds, arising from sectarian rivalries, have been throughout the whole history of the church, it will not seem to us very wonderful that these men felt such hostility to Paul,—sublimely noble and exquisitely amiable though his character was.

They expected by their conduct, the apostle says, ‘*to add affliction to his bonds*,’ or ‘to make his bonds gall him.’ In the opinion of some expositors, the reference in these words is to outward trouble, the belief of Paul’s opponents being supposed to have been that, by preaching the glory of Jesus as ‘Messiah the Prince,’ the rightful King of all hearts, they might arouse the jealousy of the emperor, whose anger would naturally vent itself on Paul, universally known as the most prominent Christian in Rome. This view seems in a high degree unlikely. It is true that Herod’s jealousy, awakened by a rumour that the long-expected ‘King of the Jews’ was born, prompted the massacre at Bethlehem; and that Pilate’s timidity led him, against his own convictions, to crucify Jesus, through fear lest, if he spared one who ‘made himself a king,’ the charge of ‘not being Cæsar’s friend’ should be believed by his tyrannical master. It is true, too, that at Thessalonica, where the Jews constituted, as they do still, a large and influential part of the community, the accusation against the Christians

that 'these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus,' 'troubled the people and the rulers of the city,' so that they took certain judicial measures against them. But it was obvious enough that, if the anger or fears of the emperor himself were once aroused by hearing that a 'king of the Jews' was much spoken of in the city, not Paul merely, nor even merely the Christians generally, but the Jews in Rome, as a race, would be in much danger. For generations their national expectations of a Messiah had been well known; and a heathen tyrant would not be likely to discriminate, in a moment of fury, between those who hoped for a king still to come, and the Christians who believed He had come. The obviousness of the hazard that they themselves would share in the sufferings of any persecution, was such that we cannot think this to have been the aim of the Jewish opponents of the apostle. The thought which first suggests itself, I should suppose, to most readers, that they hoped by their preaching to draw away converts to their peculiar views, and lower Paul's influence, and in this way, as they imagined, through annoyance, intensify the sufferings of his imprisonment, is very much more natural, and satisfies all the requirements of the passage.

In their thoughts regarding the result of their conduct on the feelings of the apostle, however, these men were mistaken. For the object of their dislike says, '*What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth,*'—whether by way of cloak for unworthy aims, or in sincerity of interest,—'*Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*' The apostle rejoiced that, whatever the motive influencing the preachers, *Christ was preached*. He believed that, 'while the full and symmetrical truth as it is in Jesus will do far more good, and good of a far higher type, than any fragmentary view, yet such is the vitality and power of Christian truth, that its very fragments are potent for good.'<sup>1</sup> To a world of sin

<sup>1</sup> Henry Ward Beecher.

and sorrow were brought by these preachers the glad tidings of great joy, that a Divine Saviour had died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and now, living and glorified, was inviting all the ‘labouring and heavy laden’ to ‘come unto Him, and find rest to their souls.’ Thus, through the gracious working of the Divine Spirit, who made even wrath to praise Him, the gospel approved itself to this soul, and to that, as ‘the power of God unto salvation.’ From the efforts of envy and malignity came ‘glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.’ ‘Therein’ Paul ‘rejoiced,’ as well he might. Yet, under the circumstances, how few even of true believers would have been able to do this! How exquisite is the apostle’s self-forgetfulness, and singleness of eye to his Saviour’s glory!

His joy, however, and the fact that it was most reasonable, must not lead us for a moment to suppose that the motive by which a labourer in the vineyard of Christ is actuated, is of little importance. The case is far otherwise. Than the condition of an un-Christian minister of Christ,—a man who professionally proclaims, ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,’ while his own soul remains parched,—who with the lips calls on men to ‘submit themselves to God,’ while his own heart is in rebellion against God,—than such a condition can any more melancholy in every aspect be conceived? Whatever outward forms of ‘call’ to the pastoral office may be desirable, and whatever measure of ability, and of literary and theological acquirement, certain it is that the great essential qualification for the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ is personal spiritual acquaintance with the ‘reconciliation,’ and consequent love for souls, and longing for their salvation. Where this is wanting, a ministerial life is an elaborate and continued lie, hardening and deadening the soul; and wherever, in any degree, worldly ambition, or other mere earthly motives, mingle with desire for the good of man and the glory of God, in that degree is a cloud brought certainly over a minister’s happiness, and in most cases over his usefulness.

Still in the fact that, from whatever motives, ‘Christ is preached,’ Paul rejoices, ‘*yea, and will rejoice!*’ In these last words we seem to see his strong soul crushing down all rising feeling of personal vexation at the unscrupulous antagonism to which he was exposed. ‘They may hate and try to distress me, and nature may at times lift her voice within me in indignation ; yet through all, by God’s help, I will rejoice in the progress of the gospel.’

How painful a contrast, dear brethren, to the large-heartedness of the apostle in this joy is exhibited in the sectarian jealousies which are so rife throughout the church, and have been all down its history ! Paul knew that personal dislike to himself, and a consequent wish to annoy him, had much to do in inducing the men of whom he speaks to preach the gospel ; yet, suppressing the natural feeling of irritation by the force of a sanctified will, he delights to think that, through any stimulus, the way of salvation is made known to sinners. How often, on the other hand, have we seen Christians allow themselves to suspect, and frown upon, and see no good in certain forms of Christian work, simply because those engaged in them belonged to another section of the church, or because the work was carried on in modes not recognised in ‘the traditions of the elders’! Very few influences, if any, have acted more powerfully against the progress of the kingdom of love than the ‘evil eye’ towards each other of the subjects of the King of love. The spirit showed itself very early. ‘John said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not ; *for he that is not against us, is for us.*’ Let us ask God, my friends, that throughout the whole church, whenever the natural impulse is felt to ‘forbid’ a worker for God, ‘because he followeth not with us,’ a sense of the heavenly wisdom and love of the Saviour’s answer may be felt also, with a force unknown in the past.

## V.

## SUFFERINGS TURNING TO SALVATION.

'For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.'—PHIL. i. 19, 20.

THE apostle goes on now to state the reason for the 'rejoicing' of which he has spoken in the close of the 18th verse. He might have said, truthfully, 'For I have so fully learned to make the manifestation of the glory of God in Christ my chief object of desire, that I am glad to hear of the showing of the way of life to sinners, whatever hostility preachers of Christ may entertain to me personally, and whatever loss of influence, or suffering of any kind, they may bring upon me.' But he puts his reason in a somewhat different form,—one calculated to remind his readers that the troubles of God's people, whilst they may serve to show forth the glory of God in many other ways, are certainly always intended and fitted to glorify Him by increasing the holiness and hopefulness of the sufferers themselves; that afflictions are among the 'all things'—ay, hold a most important place among the 'all things'—which are made to 'work together for good to them that love God.'

'I know,' says the apostle, '*that this shall turn to my salvation.*' The reference of '*this*' is not altogether obvious. Our first thought is that, like the '*therein*' of the previous verse, it refers to the fact that '*every way*, whether in pretence or in

truth, Christ is preached.' Now it is true that this would ultimately bring advantage to Paul. To his influence, in a large measure, the energy shown by the Christians at Rome in publishing the gospel was undoubtedly due, wicked and distressing as the feeling was towards him of some of the preachers. The work was therefore to some extent his work, an 'occupying' of his 'five talents ;' and in the day of Christ this would be fully acknowledged. But whilst thus the first clause of the verse would be intelligible enough, supposing the reference to be to the preaching of Christ, yet it does not seem possible, on this view of the meaning, to find any satisfactory connection between the clause and what follows, particularly the 20th verse. Another reference, however, natural in itself, and which gives to the whole paragraph a clear and consistent sense, is not far to seek. Looking back to the close of the 18th verse, you will see that the apostle's emphatic declaration there, when fully exhibited, is, 'Yea, and therein will rejoice, notwithstanding the hatred to me by which some of the preachers are actuated.' The thought of that hatred is most vividly present to his mind, and to the minds of all intelligent readers ; and to it, therefore, I have no doubt, the '*this*' points,—'the opposition I have spoken of,'—the idea, however, widening out before him, most naturally, into 'my condition of suffering' generally.

Now he 'knows,' he says, that this state of trouble will '*turn to his salvation.*' Such, through God's kindness, will be the result of what his opponents intended should 'add affliction to his bonds.'

The salvation provided in Christ is radically a *spiritual* salvation. It extends, indeed, to all the elements of our nature, being an emancipation of the whole man from the bondage of death ; but the condition of the body follows that of the soul. In a sense, we enter into salvation at conversion ; for 'he that believeth on Christ *hath* everlasting life,' and the attainment of everlasting life is salvation. But the word is

generally in Scripture applied to the state of perfect purity and beauty and blessedness for the whole nature, which ‘the day of Christ’ will bring in,—the ‘salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.’ Now all God’s providential dealings with His people, whether for the time they be pleasant, or, as with Paul at Rome, ‘not joyous, but grievous,’ are intended by Him as a training for salvation,—an education in that ‘knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ’ which ‘is life eternal,’—a discipline fitted to ripen the flower of holy character, which will be fully opened in its glorious beauty in heaven. By the measure in which we avail ourselves of this training, our salvation will be affected. All who reach heaven will be perfectly happy there from the very first, happy up to the full measure of their capacities of enjoyment; because, being ‘pure in heart,’ they will ‘see God’ as fully as their natures can see Him. But the eyes of those who below availed themselves but little of the light of truth,—who looked at God but seldom,—these eyes, even in heaven, will be able to look at Him only from afar; whilst those whose eyes have been much accustomed to the light here, will stand in the foremost circles, and there with ravished hearts gaze on the infinite glory. All the attainments in the knowledge of God which even the most diligent student can make here, are but the faintest foreshadowing of our knowledge hereafter; but those who, under the teaching of God, have profited most here, will begin foremost yonder. The servant who with his pound has gained ten pounds by trading, receives authority over ten cities; his companion, who, having the same money given him, has earned only five pounds, receives authority only over five cities. Nay, whilst to some will be ‘ministered an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ others will be saved only as ‘through fire,’ rescued from a conflagration, as it were, by the hair of the head, with the smell of fire still on their garments. Remembering these things, my brethren, ‘what manner of persons,’

think you, ‘ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness,—how earnest in prayer and effort, that from the training given us by God in providence we may obtain spiritual profit, everything which befalls us thus ‘turning to our salvation’!

How, then, shall we obtain this spiritual profit? The apostle tells us. His expectation was that his troubles would give him wisdom and strength ‘*through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*,’—that is, either ‘through the supply, by the Spirit, of all needed help,’ or ‘through the supply by God of the Spirit,’ in whose indwelling are found all wisdom and energy. The meaning is substantially the same. The Holy Ghost, ‘the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father,’ is several times spoken of in Scripture as the ‘Spirit of Christ.’ Thus, ‘Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.’ ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’ ‘The prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.’ This designation is employed here very naturally, for the apostle is thinking of the *bestowment* of the supremely excellent ‘gift’ which Jesus, having ‘led captivity captive,’ has ‘received for men, yea, for the rebellious.’ ‘It is expedient for you,’ said He, ‘that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.’

To this divine Agent are due alike the origination and the support of spiritual life. It is He who clears away the mists of prejudice, enabling the sinner to see clearly the terrible truth of his guilt and danger,—He who opens the eyes to see the forgiving grace of God in Christ, and sheds peace and love over the heart. And in the regenerate soul He dwells,—not fitfully, as an uncertain lodger, now here, now there,—but as in a permanent abiding place, a home, which He loves to make beautiful and happy. Spiritual wisdom and strength and

joy are all from Him. Only through Him, therefore, are men taught rightly to estimate the respective importance of things seen and things unseen : so that, on the one hand, prosperity shall not puff them up, or lead them to seek their rest in the enjoyments of this world ; and, on the other hand, adversity shall not unduly depress, as if all that is valuable were withdrawn. Thus it is ‘through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ’ that the occurrences of life ‘turn to our salvation.’

The figures under which the influence of the Spirit is described to us in Scripture, set forth with much fulness and clearness the all-pervasiveness of His action on the souls of God’s chosen. Jesus ‘baptizes with the Holy Ghost *and with fire*,’—to burn up the chaff within us, and to light up in our souls a genial flame of love. Again, believers are ‘born of *water* and of the Spirit,’—being thus cleansed from pollution, and having all the thirst of the soul quenched. Again, ‘Ye have an *unction* from the Holy One,’—being thus set apart to do the work of ‘kings and priests unto God ;’ or, as athletes, made in the whole man lithe and active, to wrestle successfully with the difficulties and temptations of life, and to ‘run with patience the race set before us.’ When our attention is turned to the greatness of the work of the Spirit, my brethren, all of us must feel that, in our thoughts on religion, and in our prayers and praises, we have not honoured this glorious and gracious Divine Person as we should. Are there not some of us to whom thoughts of Him have been such strangers that it would almost seem as if, like those disciples of John the Baptist whom Paul found in Ephesus, they had ‘not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost’?

Paul tells his Philippian friends that ‘the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ’ will be obtained for him ‘*through their prayer*.’ Our Lord said, ‘If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him !’ For this supreme blessing Paul did habitually ‘ask’ God. Powerful aid, how-

ever, was given him by the prayers of his friends for him ; and this help is here, with beautiful courtesy and gratitude, made prominent. It is not unlikely, I think, that in these words there is an allusion to some statement in the letter of the Philippians, which, no doubt, had accompanied their gift sent through Epaphroditus, regarding their remembering the apostle before God. Certainly there is in them a delicate entreaty that they will do this—such entreaty as he had long before expressly made to the Thessalonians,—‘Brethren, pray for us !’ How sweet and helpful such a friendship as this, Christian brethren ! The apostle prayed for his converts, and they for him ; and thus both were richly blessed. Delighting to know that the Lord Jesus was pleading for them all, they rejoiced to be permitted to cast, each of them, by intercessory prayer, his little grain of incense into the divine High Priest’s censer. Paul believed, with full energy, that prayer is the grandest of all the powers which we have of helping each other. To believe this heartily and operatively, is the greatest evidence that in a man’s soul the powers of the unseen world have triumphed over those of the seen. Do you and I thus believe ? Beyond doubt, my brethren, the feebleness of this conviction among Christians is the great cause that the church is so impure, so dead in spirit, and that, in this nineteenth century of gospel light, the world still to so deplorable an extent lies in darkness and wickedness. ‘Thus saith the Lord God, *I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.’ Were a cloud of ardent intercessory prayer to rise from the hearts of God’s people, it would break in so abundant a shower of blessing that the church would be like ‘a watered garden ;’ yea, that over the whole earth ‘the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad, the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.’

The introductory words of the 20th verse, to which we now come,—‘*according to my earnest expectation and my hope*,’—appear to indicate a twofold connection between it and the 19th. This verse illustrates the mode in which the apostle expected the position he was placed in ‘to turn to his salvation;’ and it accounts for his statement that he ‘*knew*’ his circumstances would so result. There is no more trustworthy knowledge than that afforded by intelligent Christian hope. ‘*Hope*’ is a much stronger word, as used in Scripture, than as we commonly employ it in ordinary life. It denotes a confident anticipation; and thus, in the two words by which the apostle here describes his state of feeling, we have something of an advance from assurance to yet intenser assurance. He has an ‘eager longing,’ such as is shown by one who, with rapt attention, stretches forward from some post of observation, watching to see in the distance a friend whom he knows to be coming to cheer and help him,<sup>1</sup>—yea, he has a ‘firm, confident hope,’ ‘that *in nothing he shall be ashamed*,’ or ‘put to confusion.’ ‘My Saviour, in whom I have gloried, will fulfil all His promises; will enable me to do whatever work, and to bear whatever trials, He may in His providence call me to; and will thereafter take me to be with Him for ever in heaven. There will come to me no shame. This is my trust.’

How vividly in this the judgment of the ‘new man in Christ’ contrasts with that of the world! One can imagine a friend of Paul’s earlier days saying to him, ‘Put to shame! Your position now might well put you to shame. Look back to the hopes regarding you, which those who knew and loved you cherished in your youth. Think of the prospects which your abilities opened for you of achieving for yourself dignity, and influence, and wealth. And now, through your fanatical devotion to the cause of this Nazarene, your name is execrated by the chiefs of your nation, and you are a poor man, waiting

<sup>1</sup> Such is the exact thought conveyed by the somewhat peculiar word of the original, rendered by ‘earnest expectation.’

in chains a sentence which may perhaps send you to a bloody death. Surely you have enough here to put you to confusion.' Paul's answer we hear in such words as those of his fellow-apostle Peter,—' If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.' In shame, as clearly as in anything, the divergence of men's judgment from the standard of truth and wisdom is seen. Adam was ashamed, not because he had sinned, but because he knew himself to be naked ; and ah, how evident the spirit of our fallen father is in all of us by nature, how sadly visible often even in Christians ! How prone we are to feel more shame for being detected in wrong-doing than for the wrong-doing itself,—for being poor in pence than being poor in piety,—for acting contrary to the laws of fashion than for violating the laws of God,—for doing what fools will laugh at than for conduct which wise men might well weep over ! Paul was not ashamed of his bonds, and knew that his hope was one which never would make him ashamed. He believed that in everything he would be enabled to ' magnify ' his Saviour, and that, in the heart of the man to whom God gave grace to do this, shame had no rightful place, but exultant ' hope of the glory of God.'

' My hope,' he says, '*is that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.*' After ' that in nothing I shall be ashamed,' we might have expected the clause to take the form, ' but that I shall magnify Christ.' The little variation actually employed, by which the Saviour is placed in the foreground, illustrates, you observe, in an incidental and interesting way, the apostle's ruling feeling. He would everywhere have himself out of view, that onlookers may ' see no man save Jesus only.' The substitution for ' in me ' of '*in my body,*' is also very natural. The thought of his sufferings has evidently been with considerable prominence before his mind throughout the preceding passage,—the thought of his ' bonds,' to which the hostile preachers ' supposed ' by their conduct ' to add affliction,' and which doubtless by many were expected, through

their depressing influence, to make him feel ‘ashamed.’ It seemed, moreover, not at all improbable that the end of his imprisonment might be a cruel death. Most naturally, then, his thoughts take this form,—‘Blessed be God, who enables me to cherish an assured confidence that in this body of mine, imprisoned, chained, worn with suffering, yet “a temple of the Holy Ghost,” the glory of my Saviour shall be made manifest—and this, *whether it be by life or by death*. If continued life be appointed me, then God will give me energy of spirit still to spend my strength in preaching the gospel of my Redeemer’s glorious grace; and through my very bonds and infirmities He will be magnified; for His power, I know, will rest upon me, to sustain and comfort. And when death comes, then, too, His grace will bring Him glory. While the frail tabernacle of the body perishes, the soul will enjoy the confident anticipation of new and wondrous life and strength and blessedness, seeing that to depart will be to be with Him. Thus, according to my hope, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.’

His expectation is, that Christ’s glory will be manifested in Him ‘*with all boldness*,’—more exactly, and more suitably to the passive form of the clause, ‘*in all boldness*,’ that is, ‘in the evident presence and strength of this element of character.’ In the bearing of Christians towards the world, at all points where it asserts its antagonism to Christ, it is especially by ‘boldness’ that we ‘magnify Christ.’ Nature, as the apostle has already hinted, is disposed to yield to a feeling of ‘shame,’ when our religion is derided, and insult heaped on its professors. But, relying on the good Spirit, whose influences the Saviour is willing to shed forth on him richly, Paul believes that ‘in nothing he will be ashamed; but, on the contrary, that in his being enabled to display full boldness of speech and action, and this in all circumstances, the grace and power of Christ will be gloriously attested.’

His hope in this matter is sustained by memory: ‘*as always*,

*so now also.'* As he bore in mind how before Felix he had been strengthened so boldly to 'reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,' that the governor 'trembled,'—and before Agrippa so fully to speak 'the words of truth and soberness,' that the king said, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,'—the apostle felt encouraged to believe that similar support would always be given him to avert fainheartedness.

You and I, my brethren, are exposed, as Paul was, to temptations to be 'ashamed' of Christ. They do not present themselves to us quite in the same form as to him, but they are real and strong. The world hates vital Christianity now, as it did in the first age. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'The servant is not greater than his lord ; if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.' *Profession* of Christianity the world tolerates in our time,—rather smiles upon, indeed, than otherwise, as respectable,—but Christ revealing Himself in His people it hates, sneers at, opposes in many ways. No truly spiritual man can be altogether overpowered by this antagonism ; but his boldness may be very far from unflinching. The reflection of a Christian in any degree of the type of Paul will be, ' My Saviour, from eternity the Brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His Person, was not ashamed to make Himself, for my sake, of no reputation, and take upon Him the form of a servant,—to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself,—to bear scorn, and buffetings, and death ; and, because for a few years I may be exposed, for His sake, to the ridicule and dislike, or, it may be, even the bitter and active hostility of His enemies, shall I be ashamed of Him or His cause ? God forbid ! He helping me, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.'

## VI.

## THE SAINT'S LIFE—CHRIST.

'For to me to live is Christ.'—PHIL. i. 21, 1st clause.

THIS verse gives the ground for the apostle's statement immediately preceding, 'Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death ;' by *life*, for 'to me to live is Christ ;' by *death*, for 'to me to die is gain.' To the first part of the sentence I wish to draw your attention now.

It is plain, from the antithesis, that the meaning of '*to live*' here is not, as often in Scripture, 'to have spiritual life,' considered simply by itself,—that life to which there comes no death, according to the great word of the Lord, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die.' The word is to be taken in its ordinary sense of 'physical existence.' But the physical life of the apostle, 'the life which he lived in the flesh,' as he elsewhere designates it, was interpenetrated by the higher life of love to God and rest in Him, and was thus made truly vital to the noblest ends. This is substantially what he means by saying, 'To me to live is Christ,'—the mode of expression, however, being such as to indicate, with the utmost terseness and point, that that higher life is only 'in Christ.' Whether we think of its source, or its nourishment, or its objects, we see everywhere the Saviour. The apostle means that his supports, his joys, his aims in life, are all exhibited, all summed up, in the one word '*Christ*.' He means that, if we ask what is the spring of his happiness and of his patience, what is the secret of his abounding energy, what is the object of his supreme love, what is the purpose to which he devotes

his mental and bodily powers, that one word answers all the questions. That Paul intended his words to be taken with this fulness of significance, will not be doubted by any one acquainted with his history and writings. These supply a most ample commentary on his statement here; and it seems to me that an interesting and satisfactory mode of expounding the passage will be to try to gather together the most prominent of the illustrations given in that great commentary. If intelligently and candidly gone into by us, an examination of what, with this most illustrious Christian, personal Christianity meant, is surely well fitted, through the influence of the Blessed Spirit, to be helpful to us in regard to our own religious life.

When Paul said, ‘To me to live is Christ,’ he meant that for him to live was *faith in Christ*. He says, ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation’—words evidently expressive of the deepest personal conviction—‘that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ ‘God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!’ ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.’ He felt himself to be a sinner, ‘the chief of sinners.’ He felt, and testified, that ‘the wages of sin is death.’ But he knew, and rested in the knowledge, that ‘the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Recognising in Jesus a Saviour all-sufficient, strong with the strength of Godhead, tender with the sympathy of manhood; holding His invitations to be sincere, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink;’ ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;’ convinced that God’s honour is pledged to the certain, complete, everlasting salvation of all who believe in Jesus,—Paul renounced every other refuge, cast his burden on the Lord, and trusted absolutely in Him.

It was his resolution, too, humble but firm, to maintain this confidence. The pardoning, saving grace of God in Christ he

knew to be a rock on which he could stand safe amid the swelling waters of judgment; for whom the Lord loveth, He ‘loveth to the end.’ ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ is the apostle’s cry of holy exultation. ‘I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

Paul’s faith in Christ had regard to Him, not merely as a Saviour from the ‘wrath to come,’ but as a Helper and Deliverer in all circumstances now, for this also he saw to be included in His promises. He that did the greater would not leave the less undone. When the clouds of trouble overspread the sky, thick and dark,—when ‘the sea wrought and was tempestuous,—the apostle, remembering that ‘the government was upon His shoulder’ who once hung upon the cross for us, could entertain the fullest assurance that all was well, and could ‘hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.’ In the dreariness of desertion, at a time of utmost need, by earthly friends whom he had loved and confided in, he could still trust in the Lord,—still believe that ‘He is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever,—still bear testimony, loud and clear, that none who look to Him are put to confusion. ‘At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever.’ In times of bereavement by death, he was enabled to raise his weeping eyes and bleeding heart to Him who had compassion on the widow at Nain, and who wept at the grave of Lazarus. Believing that Jesus

died and rose again, he knew that ‘even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.’ In personal illness and pain he was strengthened to be patient, nay, even to ‘glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.’ And when the darkness of the valley of the shadow was already around him,—when the roar of the river was already sounding in his ear,—for even thus far his writings enable us to follow him, and see his religious experiences ;—sweet and clear, above the noise of the waters, was heard by him the voice of Jesus, ‘Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.’ ‘I am now ready to be offered,’ says the man of God, ‘and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.’

The apostle’s statement means further, that for him to live was *love to Christ*.

This springs immediately from faith in Him. We see Him by faith to be true God, the only worthy object of the supreme affection of His creatures,—and we cry, ‘Whom have we in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that we desire besides Thee.’ We see Him to be God revealing Himself in a light of surpassing amiableness and mercy, ‘full of grace and truth ;’ for our sakes humbling Himself to a created nature, to a life of lowliness and hardship, to the endurance of association with sinners, and of the contradiction of sinners against Himself, to a death of pain and shame,—and believing this, we cannot choose but love Him, who ‘loved not His life unto the death’ for us, but ‘washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.’

How intense was Paul’s affection for the Saviour, is obvious to every reader of his history or writings. We cannot help seeing that the utterance of his heart, written legibly on all the

'issues of life,' is, 'This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.' In his exquisitely beautiful prayer for his converts at Ephesus, we have the feelings of his own heart towards Jesus most vividly delineated: 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.'

From Paul's love to Christ sprang of necessity love to Christians,—a feature of his character which strikes even the most cursory observer. All who were dear to Jesus were dear to him. To his eyes a halo of beauty and attractiveness shone around every believer, however poor or mean in the esteem of the world.

It was natural, too, for one who so loved the Saviour, that his desires should go out with strong yearning towards that day, as a supremely happy day, when he should see Him he loved no longer 'as through a glass, darkly,' but 'face to face.' To Paul this expectation was emphatically 'that blessed hope.'

Again, the statement before us means that for Paul to live was *fellowship with Christ*.

God's moral creatures can have true life, wisdom and energy and beauty of spirit, only through communion with Him. We feel instinctively that the very highest grandeur of character is at once intimated and explained, when we read of Enoch and of Noah, that they 'walked with God.' Jesus said to His disciples, 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me ; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more

can ye, except ye abide in Me.' Here was the secret of Paul's spiritual power. He 'abode in Christ.' 'I live,' he says, 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;' 'When I am weak, then am I strong,' for 'the Lord said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Christ's life in the believer acts in accordance with the laws of our mental and moral constitution; and thus it is in the measure in which we intelligently and lovingly commune with Him by the prayer of faith, that through Him we are wise and strong and happy. The frequency with which the expression 'in Christ' meets the readers of Paul's writings, shows how vividly the great apostle ever had before his heart Christ in His union to His saints, how real a thing this union was felt by him to be, and how influential. To those who do not love Christ,—to not a few, alas! one cannot but fear, even of professing Christians, if they would define to themselves their feelings on the subject,—such words as Paul employs regarding fellowship with the Saviour, must seem unintelligible utterances of fanaticism. He speaks in a tongue which is strange to the men of the world,—the language of heaven. If there were a country where all the inhabitants were born blind, a visitor who should tell them of the beauties of nature which the light revealed to him would be heard with derision. Even so, 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,' and they know what it is to enter by faith into the presence of their divine Father, to hear their Saviour's voice, and to rejoice in the light of His countenance. Blessed, thrice blessed are they, my brethren, who know from personal experience that Paul's most impassioned declarations on this head are but the words of truth and soberness. Blessed are their eyes,—for they see the Altogether Lovely.

Yet once more, the apostle's words intimate that for him to live was *devotion to the service of Christ.*

The modes in which love shows itself vary, of necessity, according to the relation between him who loves and the object of his affection. Love to Christ, which, as we have seen, inevitably results from true faith in Him, finds its proper manifestation in *obedience*; for in Him faith recognises the Supreme Lord. ‘If ye love Me,’ He Himself said to His disciples, ‘keep My commandments.’ His commandment is that His people be holy. His aim in giving Himself for us was, ‘that He might sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.’ In the Apostle Paul, accordingly, we see the most earnest and persistent effort after conformity of character to the will of God. Impelled by the mercies of God, he presented his whole life, in all its relations, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, holy and acceptable, feeling this to be ‘reasonable service.’ He strove prayerfully and vigilantly to be no longer ‘conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of his mind.’ Amid the profoundest humility and sense of remaining sin, he could yet truly say, ‘I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:’ ‘This one thing I do,—forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’

While thus ardently longing and striving for advancement in personal holiness, he had an intense zeal also for the promotion of the kingdom of his Lord in the world. This indeed was to his contemporaries, and is to us in reading the record of his life, the most conspicuous feature of his character. His glowing love to his Saviour aroused in him a great love and pity for his fellow-men, for whom, as for himself, the Saviour died. A sublime passion for the salvation of souls possessed his heart, and gave form to his life; so that, devoting himself unrestingly to missionary labour, ‘from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum he fully preached the gospel of Christ.’

From the discharge of the commission which Christ had given him no temptation attracted him, no persecution daunted him. ‘Preaching Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus,’ he ‘approved himself in all things as a minister of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings,—by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report.’ ‘I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem,’ he said to the elders of Ephesus, ‘not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.’ How single-minded and absolute this devotion!

We have thus examined in some detail the character of the Apostle Paul. Love to Christ, rooted in faith in Christ, nourished by fellowship with Christ, bore rich fruit of devotion to the glory of Christ. This was what he meant by saying, ‘To me to live is Christ.’ And certainly, as the connection intimates, by such a life the grace and power of Christ were gloriously ‘magnified.’

Such, in substance, Christian brethren, whatever variety there may be in form, is the life to which you and I are called. We have not Paul’s wonderful natural endowments; but the grace which made him morally and spiritually the man he was, is offered to us as freely and abundantly as it was to him. Nothing but our own narrowness of heart prevents any of us from being able to say, out of as full an experience as the apostle, ‘I can do all things in Christ, who strengtheneth me.’

All of us who are truly His, are in some degree living a life which in its main features resembles Paul's ; for the faith that unites to Christ certainly awakens love to Him, leads into fellowship, impels to service. Let it be the earnest prayer of us all, and the object of constant thoughtfulness and vigilance and effort, that our lives may be made ever more and more truly sublime. Without Christ, in whom alone God is so known that the knowledge gives peace and impels to devotion, we have no adequate object of life. Without Him, our highest energies remain unexercised, our grandest capacities unsatisfied. Without Him, the thought and love and purpose of an immortal spring up and are exercised, with no conscious or ennobling bearing on immortality, but only to waste and perish. ‘To each one of us now He is, if we will,—if we will, He will be for ever to each,—the Eternal Truth, wherein thought can never find its limit ; the Uncreated Beauty, whereof affection can never tire ; the Perfect Rule, whereunto each created will may perpetually conform itself, yet never exhaust its task.’<sup>1</sup> Dear friends, may God grant to every one of us to be able to say with growing fulness of significance, ‘To me to live is Christ !’

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Liddon.

## VII.

## THE SAINT'S DEATH—GAIN.

'To me to die is gain.'—PHIL. i. 21, 2d clause.

TO any person at all familiar with the apostle's writings, it is evident that this was with him a deep and most influential conviction. It often comes before us, and in none of his letters more distinctly and emphatically than in the second to Timothy, which was written very shortly before his martyrdom, and when he was in full expectation of it,—the time therefore when, if ever, doubts and fears might have been expected to take possession of him. 'I am now ready to be offered,' he says there, 'and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' It was with him a *conviction*, in the strict sense of the term,—not an impression merely, but a judgment, to which he had been brought by the careful examination of evidence; a judgment of which a man so intelligent as Paul, and so candid toward himself as well as toward others, could not but frequently re-test the grounds, and which thus, when the time of severest trial came, bore the strain.

This conviction did not rest on observation or speculation. Observation and instinctive feeling would lead a man to hold death as the very reverse of 'gain,' as a very great and frightful evil. Death is emphatically and pre-eminently, as he is named in the book of Job, 'the king of terrors'; and his sceptre casts a broad shadow, dark, and chilling, and blighting. 'Through fear of death' men are 'subject to bondage.' Even when viewed altogether apart from religious considerations, there is very

much in and about death to scare the imagination, to alarm the mind, and to revolt the heart. It takes us away from the world and the friends we know, from the work and the pleasures which we understand and are interested in ; and sends us out into a state of existence of which we have no experience, and in regard to which we can form no distinct conception. Its usual precursors are all of a kind calculated to alarm and distress,—sickness and pain, restlessness and debility ; and its effects on the body are such as deeply to humiliate.

Our hearts shrink from the thought of death, as utterly and awfully unnatural, wholly alien and opposed to our original nature. The deepest instincts of our being echo the teaching of Scripture, that God made—that God cannot but have made—man to *live*, not to die. It is natural to hate death and to fear death, just because death is unnatural. No thoughtful person, I should suppose, ever stood by a dead body, ever attended a funeral and heard the earth rattle on the coffin-lid, without feeling this. That of the friend we knew and loved, a friend, it may be, whose mind had been full of noble thoughts, whose heart had glowed with warm and tender affections,—a friend with whom but a few days ago, but yesterday perhaps, we had pleasant and elevating converse,—all that to-day remains with us should be a mass of inanimate clay, and even this soon necessarily, for the comfort and welfare of the living, to be taken away and laid in a pit in the earth, there as we know to moulder to dust ;—all this is wholly repugnant to the instincts of our hearts, utterly unnatural. And that the same shall certainly one day happen to *us*,—that the pulses now so full of life shall be still, the eye now so bright be dim, the limbs now so active be motionless,—that over our fixed unanswering features, as we lie cold in the coffin, some who love us will weep,—that we too, like the generations before us, shall be laid away in the churchyard,—that our place in the world, which knows us now so well, shall know us no more for ever,—and that in the course of a very few years, while the great world goes on as before,

buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, as if we had never lived, or never died, we shall be utterly forgotten, utterly unthought of, by all the dwellers beneath the skies, except when some careless, casual eye reads our name upon a tombstone ;—how hard it is for us, brethren, to realize all this, to present it vividly to our minds as a fact ! Even taken simply by themselves, too, how full of dreariness such thoughts are ! The dreariness, and the difficulty of realization, bear testimony that death is not that for which we were made.

Yet we know this is the destiny of every one of us. Death ‘hath passed upon all men.’ An element of uncertainty mingles with every other calculation and expectation regarding our life, but with this expectation none. ‘At midnight, or at cock-crow, or in the morning,’ it may be,—in old age, when ‘the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grasshopper is a burden, and desire faileth ;’ or in the prime of our years, while full of work, and strength, and hope ; or in the pleasant dawn of existence, for oh, how often with his keen sickle the stern reaper cuts down the green corn as well as the ripe ;—but certainly ‘the silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl broken, the pitcher broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern ;’ certainly ‘the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.’ With impartial foot the king of terrors enters the halls of the great and the cottages of the poor, and, ‘changing their countenances, sendeth them away.’ There is no discharge in this war.

Think, too, of the solemn irrevocableness of death. Many of the steps we take in life may be retraced. Many of our efforts may be repeated. The failures of a man of wisdom and energy are rounds of the ladder by which he mounts to success. But there is no repetition of death. If our lives, considered as a preparation for death, have been a failure, then we can have no success for ever. We cannot return to live them over again

more wisely. The gate of the invisible world opens only inward. ‘It is appointed to men once to die,’—‘once,’—no more.

It is certain, my brethren, that mere observation would lead us to say that ‘to die,’ instead of being ‘gain’ to us, will be a very great and terrible loss.

And mere human speculation, even in the very wisest and best, has never even approached a *conviction* that in any way death can bring gain. Strong desire, groping out in the darkness after a peace and a satisfying wisdom which life had never given them, this is all that we find even in a Socrates, or a Plato, or a Cicero.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The utterances of the wiser heathen on the subject of death are exceedingly touching. Euripides can ask—

Τίς οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν,  
Τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν;—

‘Who knows if living be not death, and dying life?’ Yet this remains for him, in Dr. Lightfoot’s words, only a ‘sublime guess.’ The poet could give no answer to his ‘Who knows?’ Socrates can say that, if a certain view of death be true, then death is *κέρδος θαυμάσιον*, ‘a wondrous gain;’ yet, a very little after, all he can attain to is—“Αλλα γὰρ πότεν ὥρα ἀπίστεναι, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανουμένῳ, ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσομένοις. ὅπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ ἀμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἀδηλον παντὶ πλὴν οὐ τῷ Θεῷ,—‘The hour of departure has come, for me to die, and you to live. Which is the better to go to, God alone knows!’ Cicero, after speaking of the grounds on which he deems a future life probable, has, after all, to come to the acknowledgment of a dreary uncertainty,—‘*Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro,*’—‘If I err in my belief that the soul of man is immortal, I err with pleasure.’ The love of Tacitus, following Agricola into the darkness, can but say,—‘*Si quis piorum manibus locus; si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguiuntur magnæ animæ; placide quiescas,*’—‘If there is any place for the shades of the good,—if, as sages think, great souls perish not with the body,—rest in peace.’ Hadrian, passing away from the world he knew, sings—

‘*Animula vagula, blandula,  
Hospes comesque corporis,  
Que nunc abibis in loca,  
Pallidula, rigida, nudula?*’

‘Poor little fluttering, pleasing sprite,  
My bosom’s friend and guest,  
To what strange region wilt thou take thy flight,  
Pale, naked, and distressed?’

On this dark background, then, of human fear, and ignorance, and impotence, how brightly shines the glory of divine grace in the calm, firm, intelligent Christian conviction, ‘To me to die is gain !’

This brings me to observe that this conviction of Paul’s *did rest on faith in Christ as the Conqueror of death.* In all men, probably, even those who do not in any degree enjoy the light of Christianity, the causes of aversion to death, and to thinking of death, include not merely love of present friends, and occupations, and pleasures, but a certain ‘dread of something after death.’ At all events, wherever any knowledge of divine revelation has come, this particular element is always present, I believe, in the fear of death, more or less definitely and prominently,—conscience assenting to the Bible statements regarding sin, its reality, and its deserts. The only adequate explanation of the existence of death in the world is afforded by the Bible doctrine, that death is ‘the wages of sin.’ The entrance of what is utterly monstrous and unnatural in the universe of God, rebellion against God’s will, has brought the frightful evil of death with it as its curse, its legitimate doom. Death is the *wages* of sin, wages which all of us have earned, and which are due to us therefore in justice, under the administration of the affairs of the world by a righteous God. And in the fact that physical death ushers into an eternity where lies the second death, is found its intense awfulness. The deep darkness of the death we see is caused mainly by the shadow of the death we cannot see.

Now the glorious tidings of the gospel are, that Christ has borne the curse, or, in the singularly forcible language of the apostle in Galatians, has been ‘made a curse,’ in our room. For the overthrow of death was not a matter for the simple exercise of divine power. With Job, we ‘know that the Lord can do everything,—everything but contradict His own nature, deny Himself, bring dishonour on His character and government. But, according to the teaching of Scripture, the endur-

ance by the Son of God of the punishment of sin, in room of men, was needful, if, consistently with the honour of the Divine Ruler, man was to be saved. This overwhelmingly impressive evidence was given to the moral universe of God's hatred of sin, and determination to maintain the majesty of His law. The Son of God humbled Himself to be a Man, a Man of sorrows, a dying Man. In infinite love the Divine Father gave His Son to death ; in infinite love the Divine Son gave Himself to death, for the life of the world. 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ;—and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' 'He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.' As the Champion of the race whose nature He had assumed, Jesus entered the realm of the king of terrors, met him face to face on his own ground, grappled with him, vanquished him, stripped him of his spoils, and proved the completeness of His victory by rising from the grave, ascending into heaven, and sitting down at the right hand of God, to wield all power, 'quickening'—giving life to —'whom He will.' 'Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death,' says the apostle to Timothy. The *form* of death indeed remains for the Christian, but only the form. All who by faith have accepted the life which Jesus offers, find it imperishable ; and that the severance of soul from body is but a gloomy archway, leading from the sphere of partial enjoyment of this life to the sphere of its fulness. Where such faith exists, then, my brethren, in Christ the Conqueror of death,—in that soul evidently, in the measure of the intelligence and liveliness of the faith, the conviction will be present and sustaining, 'To me to die is gain.' With instinctive fear the saint may shrink back from *dying*, from the weakness and weariness and pain of dissolution ; but *death* he will not fear. 'Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ !'

Let me observe yet again, with reference to the apostle's conviction here stated, that *it stood in the very closest relation to*

*the resolution in the other clause of the verse, ‘To me to live is Christ.’*

Death, as the Bible employs the term, is a very comprehensive evil, and life a correspondingly comprehensive blessing. Death includes all the consequences of sin, moral and spiritual debasement and wretchedness, as well as physical pain and dissolution. The unchristian man, even whilst he has physical life, and is doing the work and enjoying the pleasures of the world, is yet, in God's sight, ‘dead in trespasses and sins,’ being ‘alienated from the life of God.’ Now the blessing which Christ offers to us is life in the fullest and grandest sense, in opposition to *all* the elements and forms of death. And this blessing—this salvation—whilst it has various aspects, is yet one and indivisible. No element of it can by possibility be enjoyed by any one who is unwilling to accept it as a whole. The two main aspects or elements of this eternal life, whether as partially enjoyed here or fully hereafter, are holiness and happiness. Now in the resolution of the apostle, ‘To me to live is Christ,’ confirmed as it was by the whole tenor of his course, you see that there was a hearty welcoming of spiritual life, a longing and effort to do the will of Christ through the teaching and help of the Spirit of Christ. This man, then, was, in the full Bible sense, ‘*alive unto God*,’ and could, on good grounds, expect that ‘to die would be gain’ to him, as ushering him into the glorious fulness of the eternal life in heaven. No one who is not resolved, ‘To me to live shall be Christ,’ can reasonably expect that to him ‘to die will be gain;’ because he has no evidence at all that he has ‘passed from death unto life.’

Thus far of the *conviction*. We must now go on to look for a little at the *fact itself, that to the Christian ‘to die is gain.’*

Any knowledge we have on this matter is, of necessity, derived simply from divine revelation. But God has graciously given us in His revelation abundant light. ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to

His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.' 'They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by Jesus Christ.' 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,' when 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads,'—when 'they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' The Scriptures teach that at death all that is burdensome, everything of dreariness and fear and bitterness, is taken away from the believer in Christ for ever. In the state of existence into which death introduces him there are no anxieties, no failures, no disappointments, no misunderstandings, no jealousies, nothing either within or without to sadden. In the better land, toil and fatigue are unknown. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours.' Yet is the rest not that of inactivity, but of a full activity made joyous by constant strength and buoyancy. 'They serve God day and night in His temple,' and in His presence ever 'renew their strength,' so as to 'mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.' Sin and sorrow and death have passed away, and God has 'made all things new.'

There are few detailed descriptions of the heavenly life in Scripture; and these are obviously, to a very large extent, figurative. The language of earth could not reveal the wonders of heaven; neither could our minds and hearts, at the present, bear a full revelation of 'the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' But all the powers of human language are brought into play,—all the most suggestive images of earth are employed,—to impress us with the conviction that beauty, and

sweetness, and love, and joy, which will perfectly satisfy all our capacities of happiness, capacities ever expanding throughout eternity,—this is what ‘God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ Is not this ‘gain’?

Think of the change in relation to *knowledge*. The spring of all true beauty and excellence in God’s moral creatures is knowledge of Him. The natural man regards Him as an austere Master, whose work is drudgery, and His wages unsatisfying,—one whom it is not desirable to know, because impossible to love or to please. From this wilful ignorance of God’s true character come, of necessity, sinful affections and a sinful life. But the Christian knows God as He has revealed Himself in Christ, merciful and gracious, possessed of every excellence in infinite perfection, and in the gospel displaying His perfections in a light of the most sublime and tender grace to man. In him who begins thus to know God, the heart becomes full of strong yearnings to know more. The believer prays for ‘the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God,’ ‘that he may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.’ He feels that the grand central pursuit of his life should be growth in the knowledge of God,—the attainment of clearer views and livelier impressions of His excellences,—wisdom to trace His goings more distinctly and rejoicingly in creation and providence and redemption. He feels that all study should, in its degree, be with him study of God. But we find, at the same time, Christian brethren, that as a matter of fact the energy of our spirits in this pursuit often flags. Remaining depravity weighs the spirit down; and bodily weakness, too, is felt as a heavy clog. Languor steals upon the senses, so that he who would search and soar, ‘mounting up with wings like the eagle,’ finds himself fettered to a load of clay. Now depravity, and all the encumbering influences of the mortal body, are left behind at death. Death rends the

veil, and breaks the fetters, and ushers the spirit, so long confined to the gloomy twilight of an earthly prison, into glorious light and liberty. Then, dear friends, shall we have knowledge to a degree, and in modes, of which now we cannot even form any conception. Being then perfectly ‘pure in heart,’ we shall ‘see God’ no longer darkly, as by a mirror, but face to face. Our spirits will apprehend his excellences not slowly, indirectly, inferentially, as now, but by a direct intuition, far more certain, and distinct, and satisfying, than is now the action of the eye or any bodily sense. We shall no longer have to content ourselves with gathering pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of truth, but shall soar over its waters with bold untiring wing, or fearlessly plunge into their depths, and, with unfailing success, explore their wonders. We shall know then ‘even as we are known.’ Say, brethren, for those who, through grace, are enabled to cherish such hopes, is not ‘to die, gain’?

Again, think of the change in relation to *holiness*. Throughout the believer’s life here it is sadly manifest that depravity, though dethroned and maimed, is not yet slain. Even in our pursuit of good aims, even in our holiest religious services, how much of sin enters to mar the good! Now the ‘law of sin’ which, in so many ways, ‘wars against the law of the mind,’ and lamentably often ‘brings us into captivity,’ is ‘in the members.’ The appetites and distempers of the present mortal body give rise to many spiritual distempers and perversities. Around us, too, whilst we are here, lies the world, full of temptations; and our great adversary, the devil, is ever striving, with his subtilty and malignity, to bring us under the power of these temptations. Yonder, ‘the spirits of just men’ are ‘made perfect.’ From the moment of death every desire is pure, every aim is noble; and the noble aims are all attained in fulness. Even in this world, the believer, contemplating his Saviour with affection and confidence, is changed by the Spirit into His image, ‘from glory to glory.’ Yonder, up to

the fullest capabilities of our nature, ‘we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’

Yet again, think of the change in relation to *society*. Our happiness here is, in large measure, dependent on pleasant companionship. To many of us God has granted the enjoyment of friendships both sweet and helpful. Many of us He has, in His kind providence, linked in such close relationships as involve frequent intercourse, with those who are at the same time kinsfolk in Christ Jesus, and cheer and aid us by holy fellowship. Yet great numbers of those with whom we have to associate have no sympathy with us in our deepest loves and longings; and even in those who have such sympathy we find many incongruities and hardnesses, much which is calculated to mislead and enfeeble us, rather than to enlighten and invigorate. How apt, too, are jealousies and pettinesses to becloud all the friendships of earth, even friendships between wise Christians! Our Supreme Friend is known by us here only through faith; our communication with Him is through the secret influences of His Spirit, enabling us to apprehend with mind and heart the manifestations He makes of His glory and grace in His Word and ordinances; and our faith is so weak, even at the best, that we see Him but by passing glimpses. Death, dear brethren, will introduce us into a world where all are friends, true and wise, and full of unvarying, exulting, rejoicing sympathy in all our aspirations.

It has been often questioned whether any portion of the happiness of heaven comes from human friendship, or whether the absorption of the saints in the contemplation of the glory of Christ, and the enjoyment of His love, will not be such as to prevent even the recognition of the friends of earth. ‘This latter supposition could only be adopted in consequence of imperfect views of the nature of the mind, and the working of its affections. The love of Christ does not cast out, but enhances and purifies, love to our fellow-creatures. It will be true in heaven, as on earth, that “Every one who loveth Him

that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him."<sup>1</sup> The deep instincts of our hearts, my brethren, are sounder guides in matters of this kind than any mystic speculation. I cannot but believe that our ardent longings to see and know again beloved ones taken away from us by death, are not the fruit of depravity, or folly, or weakness, but implanted in us by God, and are thus, with regard to all who have fallen asleep in Christ, a kind of prophecy of joyous recognitions, and friendships resumed, never again to be broken, in that happy land where, to the full, God 'satisfieth the longing soul.' What sweeter assurance, too, is found in the Word of God than that, while the glorified 'rest from their labours, *their works do follow them*'? They 'follow them,' to minister to their joy,—and how otherwise than through recognition? The Christian friend in glory rejoices to welcome him with whom on earth he had affectionately pleaded to seek the Saviour. The minister with delight sees this and that church member whom he had taught the way of life, and for whom he had wrestled with God in prayer, enter in by the gates of pearl. The mother feels as if a new blessedness were added even to heaven, when, beholding in the New Jerusalem the child whom it had been her chief anxiety to train for Christ, she knows that her 'works have followed' her.

Along with those thus bound to us by ties formed on earth, holy angels also will be our companions in heaven, and all the good of all generations of the world's history, all who have 'washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' And our association with all this 'goodly company' will be eternal.

But, amid the enjoyments of the society of heaven, He whom faith makes to the believer here his Supreme Friend, beyond all comparison the dearest, the most trusted, the most influential, will there also be supreme in his affections and interest, ay, loved and delighted in far more intensely than

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Henderson, of Galashiels.

here, because far better known, ‘seen as He is.’ With Him we shall have intercourse direct and personal, so close and satisfying, that even the most intimate communion with Him, with which we are privileged on earth, shall seem then, in memory, to have been absence,—for, ‘whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.’ Knowing, then, Christian brethren, as we do, how ravishing is the view which, in hours of spiritual elevation, the children of God have of their Lord even here,—knowing, as we do, that the joy of fellowship with Him even here is ‘unspeakable and full of glory,’—‘how shall we conceive of that flood of unimaginable ecstasy which shall fill and overflow all our dilated spirits, when faith shall be exchanged for vision, and distant love for present and personal communion! What pleasure beyond description shall it not inspire in souls like those of the just made perfect,—souls divinely sensitive to the impressions of whatever is truly great, and good, and fair,—to contemplate directly, without a mirror, distinctly, without a veil, the vivid revelation which shall then be made of the excellence and loveliness of the glorified Immanuel,—to gaze upon His sacred Person, now resplendent with unearthly splendours, yet bearing the traces, conspicuous still, of the tremendous conflict He once endured for His redeemed, nor therefore, in their esteem, the less majestic or less lovely for these illustrious scars,—to dwell upon the nearer and more impressive exhibitions which, through that sacred Person, He shall make before the glorified immortals, of His transcendent character, uniting all that is august and lovely in the attributes of Deity with all that is great and fair in those of a perfect humanity!’<sup>1</sup>

If thus then, my friends, death be for the believer the gate by which he passes from ignorance and sin and trouble into perfect purity and blessedness, this is certainly ‘gain’ to him, incalculable gain.

The connection in which the apostle makes the present

<sup>1</sup> John Brown Patterson, of Falkirk.

statement implies, you will remember, that by a Christian's death Christ is glorified. 'My earnest expectation and my hope,' Paul says, 'is that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death; by life, if that be granted to me, for to me to live is Christ; by death, for to me to die is gain.' 'When I, who once blasphemed the name of Jesus, and slew His servants, am by His grace introduced into the ineffable joys of heaven, *and this through the very instrumentality of death, which sin brought on man as a curse, but which the Saviour's love and power have made the gate of life,—* angels and the members of the church triumphant, and Christian friends left behind, will see one proof more that "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches, and honour, and strength, and glory, and blessing."

It is easier, very much easier, to believe the general proposition that to the Christian death is gain, or to believe that to the Apostle Paul death was gain, than to have, with regard to ourselves, the same calm, restful conviction that it will be so, which, with regard to himself, the apostle had and expresses here. Lack of such a conviction is a grave defect in a believer; not merely because, through subjection in this matter to 'the spirit of bondage,' he falls far short of attaining the fulness of peace which the religion of Jesus is fitted to give, but because a most potent means of 'magnifying Christ' is wanting to him. In a world like this, where nature so fears death, few things testify more impressively of the power of divine grace, than composure of spirit in view of meeting the last enemy, where this composure is manifestly intelligent and associated with humility. Let us then strive, dear friends, to 'lift up the hands which hang down.' In the *mode* of our departure from the world, indeed, we can never rejoice. If it might be so, we would rather 'not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.' We shudder instinctively at the thought of the gloomy passage. Yet it is true that for all believers divine grace has discrowned the king of terrors, has

changed the curse into a ‘gain,’—yea, ‘hath abolished death.’ ‘What shall we then say to these things,’ dear friends,—to these ‘exceeding great and precious’ assurances, and to our frequent lapses, notwithstanding, under the ‘spirit of bondage, again to fear?’ ‘Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief.’ Progress in superiority to the fear of death will be made by Christians, partly by direct effort with that aim in view, through meditation on the promises on this subject given in Scripture, and prayer for lively faith in these promises; but mainly by steady, prayerful endeavour to advance in general Christian wisdom, and beauty, and energy. A life of growing faith and usefulness will, by God’s blessing, yield ever growth of hope. As a Christian is able to see more and more distinctly that ‘through Christ, who strengtheneth him,’ he is, like Paul, ‘fighting a good fight,’ the clearer ever will grow the joyous conviction that for him, as for Paul, ‘there is laid up a crown of righteousness,—that for him, as for Paul, ‘to die will be gain.’

## VIII.

## A STRAIT BETWIXT TWO.

'But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour : yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better : 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith ; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.'—PHIL. i. 22-26.

THE apostle's statement of his conviction that death will be 'gain' to him, suggests that it is his desire, perhaps his prayer, to die. The case has another aspect, however, and to it his thoughts now turn. Death, whilst it would bring an unspeakable accession of holiness and blessedness, would remove him from the sphere of 'labour in the gospel.' He would no longer be able to teach, and counsel, and comfort his Christian brethren, or to carry the knowledge of Christ to the darkened. Now his heart was enthusiastically in this work ; his mental vigour was as yet undiminished ; and of his physical energy a considerable measure yet remained to him, notwithstanding all his toils and sufferings. He might therefore reasonably think that, if his life were prolonged, he would still be of service in the world. Thus he was brought into perplexity. When he looked at his own interests by themselves, he could not but desire 'to depart, and be with Christ ;' when he looked at the church and the world, it seemed that he was still needed here. As he mused on the matter, this impression of his being needed here yet a while deepened into a conviction. He felt confident, therefore, that he would be left on

earth, and meekly and lovingly acquiesced in the divine will. Such is the substance of the paragraph which comes before us now.

The use by the apostle, in the 22d verse, of the expression, '*live in the flesh*', whilst in the first clause of the preceding verse he had employed the simple 'live' in precisely the same sense of ordinary physical life, shows that the intermediate clause had taken some such form in his mind as this: 'For me to die is gain; because when I die, I shall for the first time fully live, having the energies of my soul fully exercised, and my capacities of happiness fully satisfied, in the service and fellowship of my God and Saviour in heaven.' With this thought before his mind, of spiritual life in its heavenly completeness, he naturally, when coming back to speak of the ordinary life of earth, describes it by its distinguishing peculiarity as life '*in the flesh*'.

'Supposing, then, that I live in the flesh, *this is the fruit of my labour*.' Our venerable translators—admirable, as a rule, alike for the accuracy and the force and beauty of their renderings—have here, I think, introduced some obscurity into the passage, by giving their language a definiteness not found in the original. I question whether, to any of us, the words, '*this is the fruit of my labour*', in their connection, convey any distinct meaning; whilst a literal translation is intelligible enough,—'*This is for me*'—that is, 'means, or implies for me,' a terse mode of expression, similar to that used in the preceding verse, '*To me to live is Christ*'—'*fruit of labour*'.

Paul intimates here, in the first place, that continued life means for him continued '*labour*'. To this his constitutional energy impelled him; but he felt, also, that without sin he could not cease from labour, so long as God gave him strength for it. Nothing which God makes is without a work to do. His inanimate and irrational creatures never fail to do their work. The sun unceasingly invigorates and gladdens the world. The air, heated by his beams, drinks up water from

the sea. The clouds journey far inland, bearing their precious burden of rain. The mountain ridges receive the treasure, and streams and rivers diffuse it far and wide, making the earth fruitful and fair. ‘All things are full of labour.’ To God’s moral creatures is given the sublime privilege that not blindly, through the action of material laws, but consciously, by resolutions of their own, they may fulfil the end of their existence; and in this privilege, enjoyed by them alone, is involved the possibility that they alone may fail to fulfil that end.

To *work*, then, according to the faculties which God has given us, and the openings and calls of His providence,—this is your duty and mine. The ringing music of the blacksmith’s hammer; the watchful eye and steady hand of the man at the wheel; the busy fingers tending the powerloom; the merchant’s careful supervision of every department of his business,—all this accords with the will of God, who has made a world for work, not for idlers. ‘Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.’ ‘If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.’ The man who lives as if life were meant for indolence and frivolity, is not merely treasuring up for himself far more true weariness of spirit than ever comes from a life of labour, but is grievously offending God.

Work is the law of the new life in Christ Jesus, too. ‘Son, go work to-day in My vineyard.’ In that vineyard our heavenly Father, who gives the command, is Himself the Great Husbandman. The manifestation of God’s life is holy beneficent activity: ‘My Father *worketh* hitherto.’ Here is our example. The highest conceivable honour for God’s creatures is to be ‘labourers together with Him.’ The Christian feels that his work as a Christian is, by holy devotedness and holy patience, to ‘show forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvellous light,—to grow personally in likeness of character to Him, and to be earnest and persistent in effort for the advancement of the Saviour’s kingdom. And

as this is duty, so is it the direction in which ‘the love of Christ constraineth us’ to turn our energies. Day after day, then, according to his opportunities and his measure of faith,—and be it observed that the *perception* of faculties and opportunities, as well as the diligent use of them, is largely proportioned to the measure of faith,—day after day the believer who has spiritual health is busy in his Father’s vineyard, planting, pruning, watering,—diligently and prayerfully endeavouring to promote beauty and strength of character in himself and in others. The light of his Father’s countenance makes his labour gladsome. ‘Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness.’

But what if a Christian cannot work, in the ordinary sense of the word? What if disease have laid hold upon him, life-long pain and weakness and weariness perhaps, secluding him, and forbidding exertion? Then thus, in providence, God has shown him what is his great appointed work,—to ‘humble himself under the mighty hand of God,’ to bear meekly, and by faith and patience prove the power of divine grace to give restfulness of heart even in a furnace. How exquisite are Milton’s musings, when in great measure laid aside, through blindness, from his former modes of Christian activity:—

‘Doth God exact day labour, light denied?  
I fondly ask ; but Patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies,—“God doth not need  
Either man’s work, or His own gifts ; who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best ; His state  
Is kingly ; thousands at His bidding speed,  
And post o’er land and ocean without rest :  
They also serve, who only stand and wait.”’

Ay, and as regards influence on others, too, my brethren, multitudes could tell that the sight of holy endurance in a sick-room has often stirred them for good more powerfully, perhaps, than anything else ever did.

This last remark leads naturally to our consideration of the apostle’s further statement on the subject. Not merely does he say that, ‘if he live in the flesh, this means labour,’ but that

it means ‘*fruit* of labour’—success in the work to which God calls him.

As a rule, honest, hearty labour of every kind succeeds more or less. A sensible, industrious, frugal, persevering worker in any department of the labour of common life usually secures at least ‘a competent portion of the good things of this life.’ ‘The hand of the diligent maketh rich.’ Yet there are often failures. Shipwreck overwhelms the vessel, or fire consumes the factory, on which prosperity depended; or disease suddenly and lastingly enfeebles ‘the hand of the diligent,’ which was ‘making rich.’ A Christian, when calamities of this kind come upon him, recognises in them a reminder given by God that there is higher wealth, and nobler work, than that which has to do merely with this world; and is thus, by the outward loss, helped towards a more full and hearty devotion of his energies to the prosecution of that nobler work, and the acquisition of that higher wealth.

In the spiritual sphere there is *always* ‘fruit of labour,’ though very often neither as, nor where, nor when we look for it. All earnest prayerful effort after personal spiritual advancement succeeds, for ‘this is the will of God, even our sanctification.’ Fruit of *this* kind is yielded, too, by every Christian effort to benefit others. Through all conscientious labour to quicken other souls, the soul of the labourer himself is quickened. With regard to the *direct* effect of Christian labour for the good of others, we cannot say that in *every* case even the most wise, persistent, prayerful dealing will succeed. Yet even where there is little or no visible fruit, still the conscientious worker has abundant ground of encouragement. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear: but when the fruit is

brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.' Ministers and other Christian labourers casually learn, long after, of spiritual good done through their work on occasions when, for anything that appeared at the time, or immediately afterwards, it might have seemed that they had been 'spending their strength for nought.' Thus the cheering belief grows in their minds, that many may 'arise up' in that day, and 'call them blessed.' The seed may lie long in the ground inactive, exposed to summer heats and winter frosts, and then quickening may come, in connection, perhaps, with some altogether new agency. The old agency, by which the seed was deposited in the ground, may be wholly unthought of by all concerned here below; but God has marked all the steps, and by and by 'he that sowed and he that reaped shall rejoice together.'

Let us be of good courage then, brethren, in our Christian work. Especially let me plead with believing parents, labouring in a field peculiarly interesting and important, *never* to despond,—bearing in mind how clear and definite are alike the command and the promise, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' Remember the mother of John Newton. In his infancy, she made it her great business to 'bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' She died when he was only seven years old. A few years afterwards he went to sea, and ultimately became connected with the African slave trade. Vice of every kind gained dominion over him. But he could not shake off the remembrance of his mother's teachings and prayers. Though dead, she still spoke to him. At last, as you know, he gave himself to the Lord; and for many years exercised a very great influence for good by his ministry, an influence which is in considerable measure maintained by his excellent writings on practical religion. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.' 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again

with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' 'Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters ;' for 'the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.'

This, then, is what Paul sees, by faith, to counterbalance the influence of the reflection, 'To me to die is gain.' 'If I live in the flesh, this means for me fruit of labour.' Hence arises difficulty of decision, as he goes on to tell the Philippians. In reading the statement of his dilemma, we seem to hear him musing aloud ; and to a thoughtful Christian there is something very touching, and at the same time in various ways very helpful, in standing near this illustrious servant of God, and listening to the abrupt sentences which show the course of his reflections. 'To me to die is gain.' 'But if I live in the flesh, that means for me fruit of labour.' '*And, therefore,<sup>1</sup> what I shall choose,—whether I shall choose life or death, so as definitely to long and pray for it,—I wot not.*' '*For* (or, according to another reading, "but," in opposition to "knowing" which to choose) *I am in a strait betwixt the two, having, on the one hand (as shown before by the word "gain"), my desire towards departing and being with Christ, which is far better; but, on the other hand, to abide in the flesh is more needful on your account.*'

The word translated 'to depart' is properly 'to unloose,' the figure being that of a ship unfastened from her moorings to set sail, or of a tent taken down, that the occupant may move onward on his journey. Having travelled through the wilderness of this world so long, the apostle was very willing to give up his tent life, and go over the river to the promised Canaan and its 'city which hath foundations.' He 'knew that, if his earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, he had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' He knew, too, that 'to depart' was 'to be with Christ,' and thus was 'far better,'—or, still more strongly, for

<sup>1</sup> 'Yet,' of the Authorized Version, is an unhappy rendering.

the language swells out, under the impulse of the apostle's feeling, into a peculiar fulness, 'better by very far'—than to remain here.

The one grand thought in his mind, you observe, connected with departure, is that thus he shall be introduced into the immediate presence of his Saviour. As he says elsewhere, he is 'willing rather to be absent from the body, *and to be present with the Lord.*' In looking forward to heaven, he seems to see Christ alone. 'He does not say, "It is better to depart and to be with holy angels, and spirits of the just, than to have to contend here with the ignorance and wickedness of men, to bear with the infirmities of the weak, or at best to take counsel with those who know only in part, and are sanctified but in part. It is better to go and drink of the river of life, and eat the fruits of Paradise, and wear the crown of glory, and strike the notes of praise and gladness on the harps of heaven, than to abide here to be the scorn of the ungodly, the sport of persecution, to wander having no certain dwelling-place, and to be publishing the offers of salvation to incredulous and ungrateful men." He might have said all this, and more than this; but it is all summed up or exceeded by what he does say, "To depart and to be with Christ is far better."<sup>1</sup>

Some Christians have held the doctrine, that between death and the resurrection the soul continues in a state of unconsciousness, in a sleep or torpor. To this they are led by the admitted inability of man to conceive how our spirits can act, except through a body. But have we really any greater ability to understand how our spirits do act through the body; how, while the nerves convey tidings from the eye and the ear to the brain, the immaterial soul sees and hears thereby? The relation of soul and body to each other is, in fact, so utter a mystery to us, that no views regarding it could with safety be applied to affect the exposition even of very uncertain Scripture statements. But it is difficult to see how a candid mind

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Henderson, of Galashiels.

can discern any approach to uncertainty in some references to the state of the soul after death. For instance, our Lord's declaration to the dying thief, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,' was surely something more than a promise that that day he should sink into unconsciousness, and after, it might be, many ages, awake to a sense of being with his Lord in blessedness and glory. The teaching of the passage before us seems to me equally clear. Paul says that he felt himself 'in a strait,' hemmed in by conflicting motives and feelings, so that he found it difficult to decide whether he should definitely long for life or death. Had there been any thought in his mind of a time of unconsciousness following death, I can hardly suppose that for a man of his principles and temperament there would have been any 'strait.' His decision would have been clear and unhesitating,—'Better, immeasurably better, to remain here, enjoying communion with my Lord, and labouring in His service, than to pass into a torpor, in which I can neither hold fellowship with Him, nor in any way consciously magnify Him.' There is broad and firm scriptural ground, my brethren, for the precious doctrine set forth in the familiar words of the Westminster Divines, that 'the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do *immediately* pass into glory.' Indeed it is mainly, I apprehend, with reference to the period between death and the resurrection that the apostle, writing to Timothy, makes the statement that 'our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' The teaching of the Old Testament regarding the future life generally was dim; yet, through the study of its statements, the Jewish church, with the exception of the small sect of rationalists called Sadducees, had come, before the birth of our Lord, to accept fully the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. But the intermediate state lay for them in entire darkness. On it sweetly and satisfactorily has fallen 'light through the gospel.'

'To depart and be with Christ' was 'better by very far' than remaining in this world of ignorance, and sin, and trouble. Looking at the matter, then, merely as it affected himself personally, the apostle could have no hesitation as to which should be the definite object of his wishes. It was most natural and reasonable that he should 'have his desire towards departing.' But when his thoughts turned to regard the cause of his Master in the world, doubt entered, very grave doubt. The balance of personal advantage was clearly on the side of death; but the balance of real needfulness seemed on the side of life, in the interest of the churches. '*On your account*'—the Philippians representing here, of course, the churches generally to which he stood in the tender relation of spiritual father—'*my abiding in the flesh is more needful.*'

Of struggle between liking and a sense of duty—between 'desire' and a conviction of what is 'more needful'—between the attractions of what is obviously good for oneself and call to do what is, in the first instance, specially good for others—every soul of any strength and nobleness has experience every day. But how peculiarly sublime the sphere of the apostle's present struggle! How strong and clear the faith which led him into, and sustained him in, this 'good fight'! 'Led him into' it, I have said, for you will see that an *intelligent* desire of death cannot have root except in a bright and lively faith, any more than a desire or sense of the needfulness of living to preach the gospel. On both sides of the 'straitening' you find the basis to be a vivid and profoundly influential conviction of the *life* of Christ; and that, 'because He liveth, His people live also,' guided and sustained in holy activity here, and blessed with the full glory and joy of eternal life with Him hereafter.

Believing that for the sake of the churches it was 'more needful' for him to stay than to go,—that is to say, that work had yet to be done for the consolidation and extension of the church, which seemed to devolve more fitly on him than on

any other,—the apostle had a strong impression that God would leave him still here for a while : ‘*And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.*’ It is plain, from the connection in which this ‘*I know*’ occurs, that the apostle does not here speak of knowledge by revelation, and consequently of absolute certainty. It was simply through his ‘*having the confidence,*’ or strong conviction, that his continued life was needful for his brethren below, that he ‘*knew*’ continued life would be appointed him. That he regarded this issue of his present circumstances, in fact, as only highly probable, is shown further on in the Epistle by his expressing some doubt ‘*how it will go with him,*’—whether he may not be ‘*offered*’ (by martyrdom) ‘*upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of his Christian brethren*’ (ii. 17, 23). As regards what actually did happen, the opinion of biblical scholars is somewhat divided. The view entertained by most, however—on good grounds, as it seems to me—is that the apostle’s expectation was fulfilled ; that he was released from that imprisonment during which he wrote the Epistle, and spent some years in visiting the churches and in missionary labour,—his martyrdom occurring at the close of a second imprisonment.

The principle on which Paul’s ‘*having this confidence, I know*’ is based, is evidently this—that, God having a plan of life for each of His people, no one of them will pass away so long as any work remains for him to do. The best let many opportunities slip, no doubt. Much work might have been done for Christ which was not done. But the time for it has passed. When death comes, God intimates thereby, that of work which was peculiarly allotted to this servant,—work which could be best done by him,—there is no more. When a young minister is removed by death, after a period of labour seemingly only long enough to stir the hearts of Christian observers with high hopes of his being greatly useful,—when a pious young mother is withdrawn from helpless children, on

whose Christian training her heart was set,—not sadness only, but wonderment and dismay, often take possession of bereaved hearts. Is not the assurance which we hear from Paul, in the passage before us, a very comforting and helpful one in cases like these,—that, in any deep sense of the word ‘premature,’ *no Christian dies prematurely?*

The apostle has said, ‘I know that I shall continue with you all, *for your furtherance and joy of faith*,’—that is, ‘for the increase of your faith in intelligence, liveliness, and constancy, and consequently your advancement in joy through its means.’ His warm heart delights to dwell on this object; and thus in the 26th verse he pictures to himself and his readers, for his refreshment and theirs, the happy spiritual condition into which they would be brought by the ‘furtherance’ he hoped to be permitted to give them; ‘*that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me, by my coming to you again.*’ The meaning of the first part of this clause seems rather to be this—‘*that your matter (or subject) of glorying may abound in Jesus Christ through me.*’

The key-note of this Epistle is ‘joy in the Lord.’ To this, as its tone of rest, the melody always returns; and the trained spiritual ear can hear it throughout as the foundation of the harmony. In the present place, as I have indicated, the particular form of the thought is ‘glorying,’ or ‘boasting,’ as the word is rendered in many places. This is an expression with which all readers of Paul’s Epistles are familiar, but which very seldom presents itself in any other of the New Testament writings. Saul, the Pharisee, had ‘made his boast of the law,’ which he imagined himself to keep perfectly,—and therefore to merit eternal life as his wages. It was natural that in Paul, the believer in Jesus Christ, the man who recognised in himself ‘the chief of sinners,’ there should be a specially intense revulsion from this baseless glorying. Over against the old ‘boast,’ the offspring of sin and self-ignorance, he delighted now to set ‘glorying in the cross of Christ.’ The summary of

his preaching was, ‘He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.’ Gladness which springs from knowledge of the Redeemer’s power and grace, and which, from a lively sense of the dignity and the security connected with its grounds, proclaims itself in language and conduct evincing exultant confidence in Him,—a holy trust, triumphing over the power of all that the world, and the flesh, and the devil, can bring against it,—this is what the apostle means by Christian ‘glorying.’ ‘In Christ,’ he found on every side ‘matter of glorying’ —in his infirmities and tribulations, no less than in the number and spiritual progress of his converts. Whatever brought out evidence of the power and goodness of his Saviour,—in that he exulted.

You see, then, what he means here in his hope that to the Philippians ‘*matter of glorying might abound through him by his coming to them again.*’ Strength and beauty of Christian character, energy to do and patience to bear their Lord’s will, eminence in faith and hope and love,—this was what their spiritual father desired to see abounding in his children;—proof of all kinds that their Lord was ‘working in them to will and to do,’ and thus giving them ever ampler grounds, in their own experience, for triumphant delight in Him. The apostle trusted that this would be given to them ‘*through him*’ (Paul) as an instrument; but, as he reminds them by his favourite expression, matter of true glorying can exist, or increase, only ‘*in Christ Jesus,*’—only for those who, through union to Him, enjoy His guiding and sustaining influences, and have indeed His life acting in them.

## IX.

## CONVERSATION BECOMING THE GOSPEL.

'Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.'—  
PHIL. i. 27, 1st clause.

WITH the free discursiveness of a familiar letter, Paul passes now for a time from the mention of his own circumstances and spiritual experiences, to exhort his Philippian friends to cultivate earnestly those Christian graces which their position at the time most severely tested,—stedfastness, love, and humility. Of these duties, he speaks from the 27th verse of this chapter down to the 16th of the next. The section is introduced by a great comprehensive precept, of which all that follows is but a detailed illustration,—'Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.'

The word '*conversation*,' as employed in modern English, designates one element of our social life, the interchange of thought by speech; but at the time our version of the Bible was made, it meant '*a course of life or conduct*' generally; and wherever it occurs in the Bible, which it does often, this is its meaning. The line of thought will in most cases lead readers of any intelligence instinctively to give the word something like its correct force; except perhaps in 2 Pet. ii. 7, where, in the statement that '*just Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked*,' there may be a risk of its being taken in the modern sense, which covers only a portion of the meaning. In the passage now before us the word employed in the original is not that usually rendered '*conversation*,' but one which gives an

interesting peculiarity of colouring to the general idea of ‘course of life.’ It denotes specifically ‘life as citizens.’ ‘Our citizenship is in heaven,’ says the apostle further on in the Epistle (iii. 20),—for such is his statement, the word there translated ‘conversation’ being a sister form of that which occurs here; and his present injunction is that his readers should, even whilst as yet out in the wilderness, or at least at a distance from the centre of the city, where the King’s palace stands, remember ever their privileges and responsibilities, and live as ‘children of Zion’—persons enrolled among the citizens of the city of God. This thought has evidently a special fitness and force in a letter addressed to the Christians of Philippi,—who, living in a Roman colony, saw everywhere pride in the possession of the most illustrious earthly citizenship, and had themselves witnessed the assertion of its privileges by Paul and Silas, when Paul said to the serjeants and the jailor, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.’

The gospel being the charter of the sublime citizenship enjoyed by Christians, the apostle calls on his readers to discharge the functions connected with their privilege in a manner such as ‘becometh the gospel of Christ’—as elsewhere he calls on us to ‘walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,’ to ‘walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,’ to ‘walk worthy of God who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory.’ A glance at the prominent features of the gospel will enable us at once to see the outlines of the character which ‘becometh’ those who believe it.

The gospel is a divine message which assumes *the paramount importance of our spiritual relations to God*; and, consequently, a ‘conversation’ becoming it must be one in which *our spiritual interests are always regarded*. By nature, being ‘carnally-minded,’ governed by the influences of the lowest—the animal

—element of our being, which ought to be subject, not sovereign, we think little about our souls. We dislike reflection, because we find it to awaken doubts and fears. Thus we are in great measure strangers to ourselves. Now Christ, whilst offering salvation for the whole man, offers it through the moral nature. The body follows the condition of the soul. Hence the tone ringing through all the instructions and promises of the gospel is, ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ Accordingly, a life becoming this gospel will certainly be one in which, at all times, the soul’s interests are regarded and treated as of foremost moment. Alas, then, dear brethren, how very *unbecoming* the gospel the lives of many who call themselves Christians are! Might not one reasonably suppose a *forgetfulness* of the interests of the soul to be the key to very much of their affections and conduct? Let us think how the case stands with ourselves.

Again, the gospel is a divine message of grace; and therefore *a conversation becoming it will be one in which happiness and gratitude are manifested*. ‘Good tidings of great joy,—trustworthy news of forgiveness for sinners, free and full,—this is the gospel. Now what will accord with the belief of this? The heart will be lightened of a heavy burden, will it not? The eye, bright with joy and thankfulness, will see a new beauty shed over the whole world.

‘Sweet as home to pilgrim weary,  
Light to newly opened eyes,  
Water-springs in deserts dreary,  
Is the rest the cross supplies.’

Afflictions may come, yet there will be no murmuring, for rest is given by the assurance that ‘He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, shall with Him also freely give us all things.’ As the lark springs at dawn from its dewy nest, and soars to heaven’s gate, pouring out its song of praise, so with the Christian soul, mounting up on the wings of

faith and hope. Life will be a song of praise,—sometimes modulating into a plaintive minor, yet still praise. In the prison at Philippi, at midnight, their backs bleeding from the scourge, Paul and Silas sang praises to God ; and the calm, peaceful tone of the Second Epistle to Timothy shows us that a visitor to the apostle, in the last dreariest time of his earthly career, would have seen light in the prison-house then also. The body, worn with suffering, and exposed perhaps to the cold and damp of a dungeon, needed the protection of ‘the cloak left at Troas’ (how pathetic a request that is for him who has ears to hear !) ; the apostle saw the time of his departure by martyrdom to be at hand ; yet how brave, how confident, and restful, and happy, the noble heart is ! ‘I am ready to be offered,’—‘and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom : to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.’ How well ‘becoming the gospel of Christ’ is such repose of soul in Him,—how impressive an evidence of the reality and power of religion !

Further,—the gospel *reveals an open way of access to God*; and hence *a conversation becoming it will be a life of child-like reliance on God, and communion with Him*. The root of all sin is the desire to be independent of God : ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.’ Every unconverted man acts as if he were independent, and, under one disguise or another to his own mind of the monstrous folly, tries to believe himself independent. In regard to outward things, however, the delusion of independence often fails. In seasons of sudden distress, when the soul is stirred to its depths by mortal fear or by bitter sorrow, the sense of impotence and dependence forces itself on the heart, and out of these depths comes a cry to God. The careless, sin-loving sailor drops, in the darkness of night, from the slippery shrouds into a stormy sea ; the slumbering landsman, who went prayerless to rest, is roused from his dreams to find his house on fire, and the flames roaring around him even in

the bed-chamber : ah ! brethren, in times like these, when the truest and deepest nature will have her own, then comes forth an agonized appeal to the mercy of God. When Jonah's heathen mariners were afraid, because the Lord had sent out a great tempest into the sea, they 'cried every man unto his god ;' and the shipmaster said unto Jonah, 'What meanest thou, O sleeper ? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.' With the unbeliever, however, this sense of dependence is only occasional, and of partial reference. In the Christian it is habitual, and universal in its sweep. The gospel, as we have seen, exhibits the interests of the soul as of supreme importance ; and in regard to its welfare the Christian feels his dependence on God to be as absolute as with reference to outward safety and comfort. He feels his need of the influences of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten and quicken, sanctify and comfort. He sees that Jesus has rent the veil, and opened a way by which through faith he may enter into the Most Holy Place, and with acceptance hold fellowship with God. He enters, and asks, and receives. He finds it ineffably sweet to pour out his heart before his Father ; and thus, as his knowledge and faith of the gospel grow, prayer becomes increasingly habitual to him, until it may be said of him that 'he dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.' To speak of a prayerless Christian is to say that which is self-contradictory, as if one spoke of a dutiful and affectionate child who habitually shunned his father.

Again, the gospel is *a revelation of God's hatred of sin*; and therefore *a conversation becoming it must be one of earnest and persistent struggle against sin*. God has not left Himself without a witness in man to the claims of the divine law ; but, amid the din of earthly excitements, the still small voice of conscience is often unheard. When in revelation the Holy Spirit leads us to Sinai, and proclaims to us the exceeding broad commandment, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself,'—then, looking in upon our hearts, and round upon our lives, and comparing them with God's standard, we cannot but cry, 'Unclean, unclean ;' for 'we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.' When He leads us to think of the misery of the world, too,—of pestilence and war, of sickness and pain, of bereavement and disappointment and remorse, of the mysteriousness and frequent agony of death, and of the revealed and anticipated torments of hell,—and shows us that all these are the direct and legitimate results of sin, we feel the lesson to be a most impressive one. Yet, brethren, weighty as these teachings are, the man who with candour and intelligence and faith considers the gospel of Jesus Christ, contemplates His life of lowliness and hardship, sees His agony and bloody sweat, hears His cry of desolation, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?' and knows all this to be because of sin,—will feel that no other lesson on the reality of sin, and its hatefulness in God's sight, can even compare with this. What 'conversation,' then, will 'become' belief in this gospel ? Surely, through the blessed influences of the gracious Spirit, shed forth abundantly by the exalted Saviour, the matchless love of Bethlehem, and Gethsemane, and Calvary will 'constrain' the believer to shun sin and follow holiness. He will be pure in feelings and in life. He will be sober-minded, remembering that 'the fashion of this world passeth away,' and therefore not allowing his affections to be exclusively engrossed by any earthly good, but 'setting them' supremely 'on the things that are above.' He will be characterized by a superiority of soul to everything low and sensual, to everything selfish and mean,—by a freedom from petty views and sinister ends,—by a relish and love of everything really great and good. In his intercourse with the world there will be no envy or malignity in his spirit, but love, sincere and wise and active. He will doubtless

not be perfect here below, for ‘the law of sin in the members will still war with the law of the mind;’ but he will keep absolute holiness before him as the goal of his effort and the subject of his fervent prayers; and in his heart and life the power of the new nature over the old will grow stronger and stronger, so that he will be ever a more legible and impressive ‘epistle of Christ.’

Yet once more,—the gospel of Jesus Christ is *needed by, and intended for, the world;* and hence a *conversation becoming it will be one distinguished by zeal for its diffusion.* At every point we find the universality of the destiny of the gospel set forth. It was because ‘God so loved the *world,* that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Accordingly, Jesus is declared to be the ‘propitiation for the sins of the *whole world.*’ Exalted to God’s right hand, He has received ‘all power over *all flesh,* to quicken whom He will.’ And His commission to His servants is to ‘go into *all the world,* and preach the gospel to *every creature.*’ The leaves of the tree of life are ‘for the healing of the *nations.*’ To every son of the first Adam, who fell and lost paradise for us, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, offers Himself as the guide to a more glorious paradise above,—where there shall be no fall, for they that have once through His grace entered in, ‘go no more out.’ Now the work of making the gospel known to those for whom thus it is adapted and intended, has been confided to Christians. Still, indeed, the Saviour Himself, who ‘began both to do and to teach,’ when He was on earth, carries on His work of grace, now that He is at the Father’s right hand; but this chiefly through stimulating and blessing the labours of His servants. As we have seen, ‘Go ye and preach the gospel’ is the commission; which, whilst having doubtless a special force for ministers, is yet, in its spirit, addressed to all Christians. ‘Let him that heareth’—every one who knows of the refuge provided for the labouring and heavy laden—‘say, Come.’ The silent

influence of a holy life, whereby the Christian ‘shines as a light in the world, holding forth the word of life,’ is in itself a very great evangelistic power. But more than this is due to the Saviour. Andrew finding his brother Simon, Philip finding his friend Nathanael, and saying to him, ‘We have found the Messiah,—these exhibit the working of the true Christian spirit, and are models for all time. The believer is called to definite effort, according to his opportunities, for the deepening and broadening of religious life in his brethren, and for the instruction of ‘them that are ignorant, and out of the way.’ According to the measure of his faith he will delight in this work, and will grow wise in winning souls. He will give, too, as God has prospered him, liberally and gladly, to help forward the great cause. Thus, hearing his Father say, ‘Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,’ he will obey.

Such then, brethren, an examination of the prominent features of the gospel of Christ, the charter of citizenship in the city of God, shows to be the kind of ‘conversation,’ or life, which ‘becometh’ a person who has by faith accepted that gospel as his charter, as ‘the power of God unto salvation’ for him. He will regard the interests of the soul as of chief importance,—he will be full of thankfulness and peace,—he will walk with God in filial fellowship,—he will grow ever liker Christ in holy beauty and holy energy,—and by effort and liberality he will show his oneness of will with the Saviour, whose desire and work it is to overthrow sin and wretchedness, and establish everywhere the kingdom of peace and truth and righteousness.

The apostle, you observe, introduces his great comprehensive precept by the word ‘only,’ thus setting forth its importance, and, at the same time, linking it on to the statements which have preceded. ‘I have told you of a struggle in my mind between the desire to live and the desire to die. I have told you that, on the whole, looking at the condition of the church and of the world, my desire is to live ; and my expec-

tation that God will spare me yet a while, to cheer you and other Christians, and to carry the knowledge of Christ to regions still in darkness. But whether I live or die, bear in mind that *one thing* is of transcendent importance for you, of immeasurably greater moment than your seeing my face and hearing my voice again in this world,—*this one thing*, that your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. Thus God will be glorified in you and through you; thus the testimony of the Spirit will grow always more distinct and comforting to your hearts, that you are indeed citizens of heaven; thus you will be spiritually useful to your fellow-believers, and also to them that are without; and thus to me abundant reward will come for all my labours and sufferings on your behalf.'

## X.

## STEDFASTNESS FOR CHRIST.

‘Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.’—PHIL. i. 27-30.

THE great comprehensive precept with which this paragraph begins has already been illustrated with considerable fulness. We proceed now to examine what follows.

The paraphrase with which the last Lecture closed, ended with these words, ‘Thus’ (by your maintaining a conversation becoming the gospel) ‘abundant reward will come to me for all my labours and sufferings on your behalf.’ This thought the apostle brings out in the next clause. It is obviously a very natural one, considering the close relations which existed between him and the Philippians; and that in the earlier part of the letter he had spoken so fully and warmly of his affection for them. ‘*That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs,—tidings such as shall gladden my heart.*’ The apostle’s mode of expression, as you will notice, has a little irregularity,—his meaning being evidently, ‘that, whether I come and see you, or be absent and hear of you, either way I may come to know’—what follows.

Now comes a statement of what it is that he wishes always to find in them,—eminence in stedfastness and mutual love. These were the elements of a ‘conversation becoming the gospel,’ which had been most vividly before his mind in giving them the injunction; no doubt because, whilst being of vital importance in any circumstances, they were those which the particular circumstances of the Philippians placed most in peril. ‘My desire is, that I may hear of your affairs to this effect, *that ye stand fast.*’ Throughout the passage the figure of a contest is employed. ‘You have spiritual enemies, virulent and powerful. The world and the flesh and the devil are all at war with you. See that, in the struggle, you stand fast. Neither apostatize nor compromise. Be not attracted by any temptation, nor daunted by any persecution, from your post in the army of the Captain of salvation, or from faithful, unflinching discharge of your duty there,—however exposed the post may be, and however trying the duty. Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.’

‘And, to this end, see that ye be *in one spirit.*’ From various hints given in the Epistle, we see that dissensions had arisen among some members of the church at Philippi. News of these had greatly pained the apostle, both on account of his affection for the persons immediately concerned, and his interest in the progress of the cause of Christ, which these quarrels could not but impede. In one case, perhaps from the notoriety of the dissension, or the evil which had been wrought by it in particular, he judged it needful to address the parties by name, and plead with them to ‘be of the same mind in the Lord’ (iv. 2). In the passage before us, he appeals to the members of the church generally to ‘stand fast in one spirit’ of holy love and devotion,—as in an atmosphere which should penetrate, stimulate, and sustain them all, and in which they should feel themselves bound closely to each other through their common ardour of love to God. The more ac-

curately we know ourselves, my brethren, the more clearly we shall see that this is a state of feeling in the spirit of man which can be produced only by the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

This oneness of ‘spirit’—unity of view and feeling with regard to the highest matters—should bring about also, the apostle intimates, a oneness of ‘*mind*,’ or ‘*soul*.’ That you may understand with precision his meaning here, I must direct your attention for a moment to a particular New Testament representation of the constitution of man, on which his language is based. Sometimes in Scripture, as commonly among ourselves, man is spoken of as consisting of a body and a soul, in which case ‘*soul*’ is used in the widest sense. Sometimes, however, we have three constituents mentioned or alluded to,—the body, soul, and spirit.<sup>1</sup> According to this division, the ‘*soul*’ comprehends only those energies and capacities of mind and heart which have to do with the world known by our bodily senses; whilst the ‘*spirit*’ is that grandest power of a rational being, by which it can apprehend the idea of God, and hold communion with Him,—by which, through faith, it can live under the influences of an unseen world. The ‘*spirit*,’ which *should* be the governing principle, holding the whole nature under a firm and healthful sway, is in man by nature, as you know, brethren, darkened, enfeebled, dethroned, through sin; and the ‘*soul*,’ unhappily freed from the rule of its rightful director, tends to become ever more and more subject to the lowest element of our constitution—the appetites of the body. Through the light and strength given by God’s Spirit, and thus only, our spirits can take their rightful dignity and rule. But even in saints, in whom, through this divine influence, the spirit does hold sway, the government is far from perfect. The ‘*soul*’ but too often breaks away from its authority, and yields itself to the power of carnality. In the very forming and carrying out of plans for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom this may show itself. For instance, where combined

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, 1 Thess. v. 23 and Heb. iv. 12.

action is desirable, incongruities and repugnances of natural temperament may be so given way to, that sound judgment and right feeling are for a time vanquished ; and legitimately divergent opinions regarding the best modes of doing the Lord's work may be maintained with a courtesy and virulence very much calculated to do the work of Satan. Carnal tempers, such as act in the ways I have indicated, often take to themselves the noble name of 'conscientiousness ;' and in the plausibility of this name lies their strongest entrenchment and chief hazard for Christians. None the less for the name are they really carnal, and tend to maintain the power of sin in the world ; 'for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.'

In the passage before us, Paul calls on his readers to struggle against this evil tendency of their nature ; and, by the connection of clauses, he shows at the same time how alone it can be overcome. In the measure in which believers are really 'in one spirit,' and stand fast therein—in common simplicity and ardour of faith in the one Lord, and attachment to His cause,—will there be found also 'oneness of soul,' subjection of natural discordances, and sweetening of all social relations, through the power of Christian love. In the delightful account we have in Acts, of the church of the first days in Jerusalem, we are told that 'they were all *filled with the Holy Spirit*, and spake the word of God with boldness ; and'—being 'in one spirit,' through the indwelling of the Divine Spirit in fulness—'the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and *of one soul*' (Acts iv. 31, 32). One of the most cheering facts with regard to the state of religion in our own time is the obvious and rapid growth, in many sections of the church, of a conviction that, in so far as Christ's people are not manifestly one—not by any means necessarily in formal organization, but in sincere affection,—in so far as there is anywhere among them alienation or mutual thwarting, instead of mutual help,—they are doing much to prevent the world from seeing that the gospel comes

from God, who ‘is love.’ It is, my brethren, when the church shall be ‘fair as the moon’ with holy beauties, the beauties of love, that she shall be ‘terrible as an army with banners’ to Satan and his hosts,—then, not till then.

The apostle hopes to hear, regarding his dear Philippians, that, under the sweet constraint of the ‘one spirit,’ they are ‘with one soul *striving together*’—fighting shoulder to shoulder, giving mutual support and cheer—‘*for the faith of the gospel*.’ These last words might mean ‘for evangelical doctrine;’ in which case the whole expression, ‘Strive together for the faith of the gospel,’ would be equivalent to Jude’s ‘Contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’ (Jude 3). Paul’s general mode of using the word ‘faith,’ however, makes it more probable that he means here rather ‘*faith in the gospel*.’ ‘Strive together for the maintenance and advancement in yourselves and your fellow-Christians, and for the diffusion among those who as yet do not know Christ, of faith in the precious truth which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’

This ‘good fight of faith’ is of necessity a hard one, alike as regards the Christian’s personal character and his efforts to extend his Lord’s kingdom. It is a very difficult thing for us, amid the constant and obtrusive presence of the seen and tangible, to live habitually under the influence of a vivid realizing belief in the transcendent importance of what is invisible and spiritual. All of us have something—many, no doubt, have much—of the spirit of Thomas,—‘Except I see, I will not believe.’ Consider, in addition, the element of depravity, a strong natural bias in every one of us against the unseen God, and the peculiarities of life in Christ,—further, in some persons the hardening, the bent of the whole man towards evil, which had been produced by a wicked life,—in many, too, the secularizing power of perhaps unavoidable close and frequent intercourse, even after conversion, with unsympathizing associates. When you take opposing influences like these into

consideration, you cannot but feel that the Christian's struggle to live under 'the powers of the world to come,' must be in every case hard,—in some, from temperament and circumstances, intensely severe. In striving, too, for the *extension* of 'the faith of the gospel,' this 'good fight' cannot but be a very hard one. Here also, as in the case of our own personal battle, the depravity of the human heart, sustained by the innumerable surrounding influences of a depraved world, and backed by the craft and power of Satan,—this is the foe. In various ways, my brethren, you and I have had ample experience of the strength of this opponent. We feel that of ourselves we could do nothing against him. But the Captain of salvation bids us 'be of good cheer.' He has 'overcome the world,' and by Him 'the prince of this world is cast out.' We 'can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth us.' 'The weapons of our warfare' will approve themselves 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.'

Every true disciple of Christ, and every healthy Christian association, are, to some extent, engaged in this 'good fight' against the influences of the world, 'for the faith of the gospel'; and are therefore naturally objects of dislike to the world,—a dislike which, under certain circumstances, deepens down into hatred, and shows itself in active hostility. 'Witnesses' for God always, like those of the Apocalypse, '*torment them that dwell on the earth*' (Rev. xi. 10). The church of Philippi—eminent, as the whole tenor of this Epistle shows, for holy beauty and energy—could not escape the antagonism of the wicked; and evidently, when the apostle wrote, there had been for a time some kind of positive persecution. The '*adversaries*' of whom he speaks in the 28th verse were probably heathen, there being no allusion in the Epistle leading us to think that in Philippi Jews were numerous or influential. We cannot suppose that in a Roman Colony there was any formal avowed persecution by the government, the Emperor not having yet issued an edict expressly against Christians. But, without this,

there might easily be endless annoyances,—harassing lawsuits on false accusations, impoverishment of trades-people through the withdrawal of custom, and the like ; and probably it was to troubles of this sort that the Christians were exposed. To persecution in some form believers living among heathen were constantly liable. Apart altogether from hostility on really religious grounds, hostility which availed itself of the popular dislike to the new religion must often have been aroused by mere worldly selfishness. Just as among ourselves a widespread revival of religion might be expected to diminish the profits of the keepers of gin-palaces and other haunts of vice, and thus excite in them bitterness of spirit ; so among pagans, almost universally given up to cruelty, licentiousness, and every form of self-indulgence, Christianity cannot gain any considerable strength without materially affecting the income of many classes who live by ‘wages of unrighteousness.’ The real cause of the nominally religious outbreak against Paul at Ephesus, you remember, was that the ‘craft’ by which certain traders on superstition ‘had their wealth,’ ‘was in danger to be set at nought ;’ and of his scourging and imprisonment in this very town of Philippi, the true explanation was to be found in the fact that some wicked men ‘saw that the hope of their gains was gone.’ No doubt these cases were representative of very many.

Whatever the particular nature of the persecution, Paul calls on his spiritual children to be ‘*in nothing terrified*’ by their adversaries,—‘which,’ says he, ‘is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation.’ The reference of ‘which’ is to ‘your being in nothing terrified by their opposition.’ ‘The fact,—for, as I know it to have been hitherto, so I believe it will continue to be a fact,—that their bitterest hostility does not drive you away from your faith and confession of Christ, is a distinct proof to them, if they would only candidly consider the matter, that, should they persist in their opposition to the gospel, they shall in the end perish miserably, whilst to you

shall be granted a glorious salvation. A thoughtful observer will see plainly that your patience comes from a spring above nature, and may most reasonably and certainly infer that, if God is helping you to bear meekly and bravely now, He will, beyond question, deliver you in the end, and punish with utter destruction those who, in opposing you, are plainly opposing Him.' The thought is exhibited by the apostle to the Thessalonians somewhat more in detail than here. 'Your patience and faith,' he says to them, 'in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure, is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer; seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven' (2 Thess. i. 4-7). Proof of the distinctest kind met the persecutors fully in the face, of the impiety and madness of their conduct. Whether any at Philippi or Thessalonica yielded to the power of this evidence, we are not informed; but in many instances it has been felt by persecutors. The arrow has been 'sharp in the heart of the King's enemies.' The conviction has gone home that, under superficial incongruity, there must be a profound reality of connection in John's words,—'in tribulation *and the kingdom* and patience of Jesus Christ' (Rev. i. 9); and that no declaration could be a more reasonable one than that of the Lord, 'Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also *will keep thee*' (Rev. iii. 10). 'Calmness in the presence of danger and death,—the invincible might of unresisting weakness,—the prayer for their enemies of sinking martyrs,—the eye of faith beaming even from the dust with the reflection of things not seen,—such a spectacle has been known to abash the fury of earth and hell, as the sudden effulgence of the Shekinah itself, of the "Spirit of glory and of God resting" on God's servants, and before all their foes marking them for His.'<sup>1</sup> One can hardly doubt that

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Lillie, of Kingston, New York.

'the pricks' of conscience against which Paul had 'kicked' before the Lord appeared to him on the way to Damascus, had been mainly caused by his remembrance of the wonderful demeanour of Stephen during his martyrdom. The good missionary, Mr. Ellis, states that when he visited Madagascar in 1862, after the death of the persecuting queen, he asked the Christians often, to what they thought must chiefly be ascribed the astonishing increase in their numbers during their time of terrible suffering ; and that in reply they mentioned, among other influences, 'an indescribable feeling of interest in the Christians, or sympathy with them in the injustice and cruelty which they suffered, impressing some with a feeling that there must be something important connected with Christianity. The patient and most uncommon conduct of the Christians under such trials—not cursing their persecutors, but praying for them ; not seeking to be revenged, but to convert—affected the minds of many.'

Amid the troubles which the Philippians suffered, the thought could scarcely but sometimes rise in their minds,—' While it certainly seems to us that in the patience, and persistent adherence to the faith of the gospel, with which we are enabled to bear our persecution, we see evidence that God is with us, and therefore confirmation of the belief we have been taught to cherish, that in His good time we shall receive complete deliverance,—yet, after all, may we not be deceiving ourselves ? Is not the very fact that we are encompassed with distresses on account of religion perhaps a proof that God does not care for us, and that in the whole matter we are fundamentally in error ?' It can hardly be doubted that, amid the fires of sore trial, faithless thoughts like these have at times shot across the hearts of even the most enlightened and devoted servants of the Lord Jesus. An anticipatory answer to such the apostle gives in the emphatic words with which the 28th verse closes : ' Your boldness under persecution is to your adversaries an evident token of perdition, but to you

of salvation,—and that of God.’ ‘ You are to consider the patience as certainly bestowed by Him, and therefore as a token from Him of the issue of the contest.’

Proof of this assertion is exhibited in the verses which follow : ‘ *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake,—having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*’ Here he tells them that their sufferings for religion, far from being a ground of doubt respecting God’s love, were in truth a mark of His special affection and esteem ; and illustrates this ‘ hard saying ’ by alluding to the likeness between their circumstances and his own,—a reference eminently fitted, from the great love and admiration they felt for him, to convince and to cheer them. ‘ You may well believe that the boldness you are strengthened to display is a token from God of your ultimate deliverance and triumph, because it is indeed,—difficult as it may be, impossible for mere nature, to believe this,—it is indeed from His special love to you that you have been brought into your position of trial. I know that you love and honour me as your spiritual father, and believe me to be a true apostle of Christ, loved and honoured by God. Now you saw, when I was with you at the first, what kind of conflict with the hostility of evil men I had to endure,—and how the earthquake, and the glorious conversion of the jailor, bore testimony to God’s gracious presence with me in the midst of persecution. You hear, too, now, that, being in prison in Rome, and perhaps, for aught that yet distinctly appears, about to be put to death, I am still called on to maintain a similar struggle. Now I hold this to be a kindness and an honour shown me by God in His providence. To you likewise it has been given in God’s grace, not only to believe on Christ,—that is the foundation boon of saving grace, and therefore common to you with all God’s children,—but also to suffer for Him. Be assured, then, that since God has appointed you this conflict, and that as a mark of His favour, His purpose is to ripen and beautify

your religious character thereby, and at the right time give victory and rest; and in His sustaining grace now you have an earnest of the grace which will bring full deliverance.'

The word in the beginning of the 29th verse, rendered '*it is given*,' is one strongly expressive of *loving* bestowal. It is the same with which Paul closes that sublimely conclusive question in the 8th chapter of Romans, 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also *freely give us all things?*' It is the same also which is employed in the next chapter of this Epistle, where we are told of Jesus that 'God hath highly exalted Him, and *given* Him a name which is above every name.'

In the account of the gift there is a little irregularity of composition, very characteristic of the apostle's style. '*In behalf of Christ*' is a phrase which obviously suits 'to suffer,' but hardly 'to believe.' It was, no doubt, intended to be connected immediately with 'to suffer'; but the thought entered of mentioning faith, 'the gift of God' to *all* Christians, and thus showing more clearly the specialty of grace enjoyed by the Philippians in being permitted also to suffer for their Lord. Thus the sentence takes the form it has; and for clearness the 'in His behalf' is repeated at the end, where somewhat needlessly our translators have substituted for it '*for His sake*'.

The 'grace' of suffering for the Saviour has been already spoken of by the apostle in the 7th verse, where he describes the Philippian believers as, with regard to his 'bonds' as well as his ministerial devotedness, 'partakers of his grace.' Some illustration of the thought was given to you in the Lecture on that passage, and therefore a mere word or two further will suffice here. All true believers, my brethren, have some experience of trouble through the antagonism of the world to Christ. In this subjection to affliction for His sake, to help on the cause for which He suffered,—the cause of the world's emancipation from spiritual slavery, and from all the other forms of bondage which that has brought with it,—there is evi-

dently an element of likeness to Him. The severer the trial, this likeness to Him is ever more manifest,—and the more distinct and gladdening therefore may the assurance grow of ultimate deliverance and triumph—the assurance that, having union with Him in the afflictions of His time of lowliness, there will be union also in the glory of His exaltation. For it is a faithful saying, ‘If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.’ The Philippians might well ‘rejoice,’ then, as the apostles did, in being, according to that exquisite expression of Acts (v. 41), ‘counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ’s name,—obtaining grace to receive disgrace,—being honoured to endure dishonour—for their Lord. Their suffering for Him, and the strength He gave them to suffer patiently, were ‘an evident token of salvation,’—a clear proof that in His good time God would take them away from all struggle and pain and fear, to join the happy company of those ‘which came out of great tribulation, and are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple,’—who ‘hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither doth the sun light on them, nor any heat ; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne feedeth them, and leadeth them unto living fountains of waters ; and God wipeth away all tears from their eyes.’

## XI.

## CHRISTIAN CONCORD.

‘If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.’—PHIL. ii. 1-4.

THESE four verses constitute, in the original, only one sentence, though our translators give it in the form of three. This breaking up of the one was perhaps unavoidable, because in English, from the structure of the language, long sentences are apt to be obscure; but it is to be somewhat regretted, as hiding the fact that in the apostle’s mind all the clauses stood in intimate relation to each other.

The connection of the passage with the preceding section, marked by ‘*therefore*,’ is close and obvious. ‘Seeing the transcendent importance of your maintaining a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ, and that, in the position in which you are placed as persecuted Christians, there is a special needfulness for your “standing fast in one spirit,” thus supporting and comforting each other,—see that there be perfect concord among you.’ This is the main connection; but in the introductory clauses there is also a most natural reference to the allusion made, in the immediately preceding verse, to the apostle’s own sufferings, and the hearty sympathy with him which the similarity of the position of the Philippians to his was fitted to excite in their minds.

The central precept of the paragraph is that given in the 2d verse, '*that ye be like-minded*',—that is, not, as a reader of the English version might perhaps naturally understand the expression, '*that ye be like-minded with me Paul*', but, '*that ye have concord among yourselves*' This is expanded in the following clauses of the verse, which set forth the constituent elements of Christian concord. A glance at these, therefore, will bring the precept clearly before us.

'*Having the same love*' may mean '*having affection to the same object*',—love in common to God and His cause. This, however, appears to come in in the next clause; and therefore the apostle's thought here seems rather to be of love *to each other*, '*mutual and all-pervading love*'. '*Let the same atmosphere of affection, of sincere and active brotherly kindness, be breathed by every one of you*'. '*Brotherly kindness*',—that is the Christian idea. Believers are all, through God's grace, His children, and therefore ought to cherish in a high degree the mutual affection and trustfulness we expect to find pervading the members of a family, who have so many common objects of love and interest. The apostle's exhortation in this clause is, that the members of the Philippian church should all cultivate mutual love; so that whilst, of necessity, in the large circle there would be included many small circles, of persons whom temperament or circumstances drew to each other with peculiar closeness, yet each believer should feel himself bound to every other by cords of true and warm affection. Paul would have the relations among the members of the church such that none of the household of faith should feel himself treated as a stranger or an outcast, unrejoiced with in joy, and unwept with in sorrow; but each should know that, through sympathy and prayer and help, his burdens were lovingly borne by his brethren. All true Christians have the brotherly spirit in some measure. If in any man special affection for '*the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty*', because they are His sons and daughters, be utterly wanting, then cer-

tainly he himself knows not that precious ‘secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him,’ the secret of His Fatherhood in Jesus Christ. But, ah ! my brethren, how feeble this love is generally,—how easily mastered by separating influences of conventionality, temperament, divergence of view on worldly matters, or on non-essentials in religion !

Among the members of a congregation the tie should evidently be felt to be peculiarly strong; and to the prevalence of brotherly love will correspond, to a considerable extent, general congregational life and health. But even among fellow church members, unhappily, the separating powers, which are of the world, seem often to have more sway than the uniting power, which is of Christ. In many cases, too, such as in a congregation in a great city, that frequent free and close intercourse, which has much to do with the maintenance of ordinary family love, is impossible, except among small sections of the congregation. This fact makes it all the more incumbent on such members as have the opportunity, to associate themselves in the carrying out of the various schemes of Christian effort connected with the congregation. One of the most valuable secondary results of Sabbath schools, Dorcas societies, and other agencies of Christian instruction and benevolence, is the formation of friendships among Christians, and this under circumstances specially calculated to bring out the Christianity into most invigorating influence upon the friendship. I have no doubt that, as a rule, the strongest and the most beautiful and spiritually operative brotherly love is to be found among those believers who are brought into association in the way of effort to advance the cause of Christ.

The words which follow, and which are given in our version in two clauses, ‘*being of one accord, of one mind*,’ seem rather to go together as one clause, thus, ‘with united—or accordant—souls minding the one thing.’ The basis of Christian concord is here exhibited to us,—oneness of view with respect to all matters of vital moment. In common, Christians see God’s

supreme right to their love and obedience,—have faith in Christ, recognising the completeness of His work, the fulness, freeness, and tenderness of His grace,—and feel it to be the bounden duty, the ‘reasonable service’ to Christ, of all who know the gospel, to use every effort to send it on, and to send it in, to the darkened at home and abroad. Having this oneness of view, Christians will also, in the degree in which they yield their hearts up to the power of the common faith, have a substantial oneness of disposition and resolution. The definiteness of the form of the original—which is exactly rendered by the translation just given, ‘with accordant souls minding the one thing’—suggests, as it seems to me, something more than is brought out by the Authorized Version, ‘*of one mind*.’ ‘*The one thing*’ is an expression which, in such a connection as the present, has for every intelligent believer a clear, well-defined significance. The advancement of the kingdom of Christ in ourselves, through growth in the beauty and the strength of godliness,—in the church, through the increase of wisdom, and purity, and zeal,—in the world, through the universal and successful proclamation of the gospel, until ‘voices be heard in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,’ —the apostle would have his readers with accordant souls to mind *this one thing*.

We are now in a position to distinguish clearly the features of the ‘concord,’ the ‘*being like-minded*,’ which is enjoined in the central precept of the paragraph, and of which the two that we have been considering form an expansion. *Brotherly love*, springing from *common faith* in the great cardinal truths of religion, and producing *mutual helpfulness* in the service of Christ,—this is the spirit which the apostle desires to see reigning in a Christian association. Christian love cannot flourish apart from Christian energy. A monastery is the veriest hot-bed of jealousies, and envies, and every form of discord; and the more closely a congregation or a denomination

approaches the character of a monastery in inactivity and uselessness, the more open will it be to the inroads of a spirit of dissension. But when believers ‘mind the one thing,’—when intelligently and zealously they strive to further the kingdom of Jesus Christ in themselves and others, not devoting their attention, except in a very subordinate measure, and merely as means to an end, to the advancement of their particular ‘-ism,’ but minding simply *the one thing*,—and this ‘with accordant souls,’ not allowing peculiarities of temper or temperament to distract or alienate,—here is Christian concord in its strength and beauty.

Looking back, you observe a peculiar tenderness in the mode in which the apostle appeals to the Philippians to cultivate this grace. He says, ‘*Fulfil ye my joy*, that ye be like-minded.’ ‘I *have* great delight in you. All these years, and never more than now, in scenes of trial and of temptation to despondency, I have found the thought of the faithful church at Philippi a spring of comfort. Now I pray you, brethren, fill up my joy—make the cup of my delight in you full to the brim—by loving each other fervently.’ How strikingly and beautifully is here illustrated the elevation of the apostle’s character,—that is, of such a character as yours and mine, my brethren, ought to be—as yours and mine would be, if we cast away self-will, and surrendered our hearts to the power of Christian faith and love in the same degree as Paul ! The apostle is a prisoner, and knows not but that his imprisonment may end, perhaps very soon, with a violent death,—but how secondary a position his own circumstances seem to hold in his thoughts ! The earnest entreaty of the fettered prisoner to his friends who are in freedom, is that they will care for *their own* highest welfare by loving each other ; and the tidings that will ‘fill his joy full’ are, that discord is known no more among them. The only boon he craves is their adornment with the holy beauty of love.

This appeal for their concord, as a kindness to himself, is

presented with a solemnity and servid intensity evincing both the ardour of his love for them, and his sense of the momentous importance of the matter in hand : ‘*If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.*’ In this reference to the religious experiences of the Philippians, the facts adverted to are admirably calculated to show the reasonableness at once of pitying him in his prison, and of that love to each other, and mutual burden-bearing, which is the mode of exhibiting pity for himself that he longs to see in them. Each allusion is, to a thoughtful Christian heart, like the stroke of a rod of divine power, calling out a stream of sympathy and affection.

The ‘*If*,’ at the beginning, does not imply doubt in the apostle’s mind, any more than in such a sentence as ‘If Jesus died for you, is it not reasonable that you should live to Him?’ But you feel that, in a sentence like this before us, of servid entreaty, the form of a simple supposition has a peculiarly solemn impressiveness. ‘If in Christ—in your knowledge of Him and fellowship with Him—you find any consolation amid the distresses of life ; if from love—from cherishing love to Christ and His people, and knowing that Christ and His people love you—there come to you any comfort ; if you have any communion with the Holy Spirit, and, through His enlightening and quickening influences, have obtained peace and joy and holy impulses ; if thus your enjoyment of consolation in Christ, your experience of comfort from love, have produced in yourselves, by the blessed energy of the Spirit, bowels and mercies—a heart full of compassion ;—I beseech you by all your Christian privileges, all your comforts and hopes and spiritual experiences, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded.’ ‘Prove, I pray you, by giving love and comfort to each other, and thus giving love and comfort to me, that you have drunk deeply of the Spirit of Him who has loved and comforted you.’ Such I apprehend to be the meaning.

Such pleading as this, my friends, shows us clearly the in-

tensity of the apostle's anxiety for the ending of all dissensions among his brethren, and for the growth of sincere and active affection. It shows us how deep his conviction was of the evil wrought by division among Christians,—that it injured the religious life of the believers themselves most seriously, and that it was a very great obstacle to the progress of the gospel without. The ideal of the Christian church has been set before us by our Lord in His great High-priestly prayer—‘That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; I in them and Thou in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.’ In the degree in which this condition of things is approached, are all the ends of the church gained,—believers sustained and spurred on in their Christian course, and unbelievers compelled to take knowledge that a kingdom is among them which is regulated by power from heaven. Thus comes ‘glory to God in the highest,’ through the manifestation of ‘peace on earth.’ But oh, my brethren, throughout her whole history how far has the church been from answering to the ideal! How lamentable in our own time are the jealousies, and heart-burnings, and open dissensions, in congregations, and in and between denominations,—the bitter wranglings in church courts,—the angry denunciations of Christian brethren on platforms and from the press,—the envenomed private quarrels between persons professing godliness! Can we marvel that men of the world look on with derision, and with keen, sarcastic irony quote the language of the first days, ‘Behold these Christians, how they love one another!’

In the 3d and 4th verses the sources of discord are exhibited to us, and the means of drying these up. ‘*Let nothing be done through strife*’—more exactly, ‘factiousness, party spirit’—‘or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*’ The great causes of dissension in

societies of any kind are those here indicated by the apostle, factiousness, vainglory, and self-seeking, ‘looking’ solely ‘on one’s own things.’ They are generally all present, in varying proportions. In a congregation, or association of churches, some ‘Diotrepes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence,’ takes up a certain position in regard to doctrine, ritual, or general church administration. Clear evidence may be shown to him that it is a wrong position, and one the maintenance of which will certainly produce dissension; yet even if he sees it to be wrong, vanity—indisposition to sacrifice his repute for wisdom, and firmness, and power of management—induces him to hold to it. Others conscientiously, perhaps most of them, join themselves to him. Thus a party is formed, and the spirit of faction begins to act. Partisanship takes the place of brotherly kindness. Sympathies which ought to go forth broadly to the church of Christ, have their range narrowed down to a little section of brethren, who agree on certain trifles. Those to whom Jesus said, ‘This is My commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you,’ are seen ‘desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.’ One matter after another, almost wholly unconnected with the original cause of difference, is made a party matter; and feeling becomes ever more deeply and widely embittered. The war spreads to the right hand and to the left, enfeebling spiritual life, causing thoughtful Christians everywhere intense pain, and driving the enemies of God further away from Him.

‘Seeing then,’ says Paul, ‘that discord, and all the evils it brings with it, are plainly due to vanity, and party spirit, and exclusive regard to what are, or are supposed to be, one’s own interests; the means of preventing it will obviously be found in earnestly and prayerfully cultivating a spirit opposed to all these. Instead of factiousness and vainglory, *in lowliness of mind let each esteem other<sup>1</sup> better than themselves.* Instead of

<sup>1</sup> ‘Other’ here, as several times in the Authorized Version, is plural. See, for example, Josh. viii. 22, and the 3d verse of the 4th chapter of

regarding self-interest only, *look every man also on the things of others.*

An unregenerate man, whether he be simply indifferent to religion, or the votary of a false religion, is proud. The essence of sin is arrogant self-assertion against God ; and it follows most naturally that the sinful heart will be self-asserting against man also. A soul which, through pride, has broken away from the orbit that God made it to revolve in, and has become a ‘wandering star,’ cannot but, through the impulse of the same pride, seek to be itself the centre of a system. ‘*Lowliness of mind*’ is therefore a distinctively Christian virtue. Energetic, honest, sober, a man may be through other influences than those which stand connected with the knowledge of Christ ; but truly humble, never. This element of character enters only when, in the light of God, we see our ignorance, and folly, and feebleness, and guilt ; and learn also, through the example of the Lord, the sublime beauty and dignity of humbling ourselves in self-sacrificing love. ‘Learn of Me,’ He says, ‘for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.’ ‘If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought to wash one another’s feet.’ He ‘took upon Him our flesh, and suffered death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility.’<sup>1</sup>

Being Christ-like, as the apostle illustrates in detail in the wonderful paragraph which follows that now before us, true ‘lowliness of mind’ has nothing in common with *meanness of spirit*. Whilst it recognises facts as they are in human nature, it involves essentially a profound respect for man’s *possible self*,—self changed, as—blessed be God’s name!—it will be, and is even now from ‘glory to glory’ becoming, in all true believers, into the likeness of Christ. Neither is this spirit in any measure allied to *despondency*. The truth which awakens it is this Epistle. In the age when our translation was made, this form was employed for the plural as freely as ‘others.’

<sup>1</sup> Collect of the Church of England, for the Sunday before Easter.

the gospel, the tidings of love. Thus the very same light which reveals to us our own destitution of anything to be proud of, shows us abundant ground to ‘glory in the Lord.’ Discerning our own guilt, we see at the same time that ‘the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.’ Convinced that we know nothing of ourselves as we ought to know, we find also that ‘we have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.’ Recognising our own utter weakness, we discover likewise that we ‘can do all things in Christ, which strengtheneth us.’ Christian humility leads a man to ‘abide in Christ,’ and thus to possess all he needs. Says wise and good Sir Matthew Hale, on a retrospect of many years, during which he had been called on to occupy himself with great affairs, and, in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, had ‘adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour,—‘I can call my own experience to witness that, even in the external actions and incidents of my whole life, I was never disappointed of the best guidance and direction, when, in diffidence of my own ability to direct myself, or to grapple with the difficulties of my life, I have with humility and sincerity implored the direction and guidance of the divine wisdom and providence.’

This ‘lowness of mind’ leads ‘*each to esteem other better than themselves.*’ A similar precept to the present is given by the apostle to the Romans, when he enjoins them to ‘be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another;’ and to the Ephesians, when he calls on them to ‘submit themselves one to another in the fear of God.’ Peter, too, says, ‘All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.’<sup>1</sup> The basis of this mutual ‘subjection’ is exhibited in the passage now before us. ‘Submit to each other, as each esteeming the other to be better than himself,—‘superior to himself’ in important respects. This does not at all imply that there should be blindness to one’s own abilities and attainments, or to the deficiencies of others. We are

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 10; Eph. v. 21; 1 Pet. v. 5.

bound to struggle earnestly against our natural tendencies to undervalue our neighbours, and ‘think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think ;’ but excess in the other direction, not very common certainly, but which does occasionally show itself in certain temperaments, is also injurious. Some approach to really accurate knowledge of our own powers and those of the persons with whom we associate, is needful for our rightly filling the place of Christian usefulness which God has assigned us, and helping our brethren to fill theirs. ‘My humility,’ says Luther, ‘is not of so foolish a kind as to make me desirous of concealing the gifts God has bestowed on me.’ Says Paul, ‘In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, *though I be nothing.*’ These last words show where Christian humility lies. There may be a consciousness of knowledge and power, but there is a profound conviction at the same time that these are wholly through the gracious working of God’s Spirit, in one personally unworthy and impotent. It is felt that acuteness and learning and Christian activity are, as Luther has it in the words I have quoted, ‘gifts of God,’—and ‘where is boasting then? It is excluded.’

The spirit of Christ will lead us, however great may be our powers, and however beautiful our character, in comparison with the powers and characters of those around us, to endeavour to serve them in love, ‘to please our neighbour for his good to edification,’ to ‘bear one another’s burdens.’ It will lead us to ‘*look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,*’—to cherish and manifest a spirit of unselfishness in regard to all things,—to be considerate, active, self-denying, for the good of others, feeling them and ourselves to be in a bond of brotherhood. Jesus, infinitely glorious in dignity and holiness, humbled Himself for your sake and mine. The ‘Lord of all,’ He became ‘the Servant of all.’ ‘The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.’

But a Christian, as he grows in spiritual wisdom, will not merely see ever more clearly the dutifulness and beauty of self-sacrificing consideration for others, but abundant ground, too, for ‘*esteeming others better than himself.*’ Increasing self-knowledge brings increasing self-loathing. With growing purity and beauty, there is a deeper sense of the vileness of remaining impurity. His ignorance, too, the degree in which his attainments are below what his privileges might have led him to, his dulness of spiritual apprehension, his lack of spiritual energy,—these come more distinctly before his mind. Thus he cherishes a lowly opinion of himself. Others he cannot know as he knows himself; and ‘the charity which always accompanies true humility leads him to attribute what seems to be good in other men to the best principle which can reasonably be supposed to have produced it; while it leads him, from his necessary ignorance of their motives, to make allowances for their defects and failings, which he cannot make for his own.’<sup>1</sup> John Howe, certainly one of the very wisest and best men of his age, says, ‘Perhaps the reason why, in some disputable points, I have seen further than some of my brethren, is because their more elevated minds have been employed on greater and nobler objects, which has prevented their looking so minutely into these particular questions.’ It is very interesting to see, in the case of our apostle himself, how, as he ripened in spiritual excellence, his ‘lowness of mind,’ in his judgment of himself, as compared with others, finds always stronger expression. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we find him describing himself as ‘the least of the *apostles*,’—in the considerably later written Epistle to the Ephesians, as ‘less than the least of all *saints*,’—and in the still later First Epistle to Timothy, as ‘the chief of *sinners*.’

Another fact, too, which is fitted to lead a thoughtful person to ‘esteem others better than himself,’ is that, however little which is estimable or admirable may be in their character at

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Brown.

present, there are in them the grandest *possibilities* of holy character, and of fitness for some form of the work of Christ. The wild, brawling street-boy may yet be a Bunyan ; the careless, dissolute young sailor, a Newton ; the self-righteous bigot, a Paul.

## XII.

## THE GREAT EXAMPLE.

'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; 7 But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'—PHIL. ii. 5-11.

**I**N this singularly interesting and important paragraph, the apostle enforces the preceding counsels to the cultivation of self-denying love, by the argument strongest of all to the heart of every Christian, the example of the Lord Jesus.

The first fact in the history of the Lord to which he refers is, that *God condescended to become man*: '*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*'

You will observe that the word 'nature' is not employed here, but 'form.' The probable reason appears, when we think of the apostle's immediate object in referring to the Saviour, which, as we have seen, was to set Him forth as an *example* for us of kind and self-sacrificing consideration for others. Now we cannot change our nature, or assume an additional nature. We are, and must remain, simply human. In the Lord's taking human nature into association with the

divine, therefore, there is nothing even approximately imitable by us. But as regards the surrender for the good of others of wealth, ease, rank, repute, or life, there is a possibility, at an infinite distance, of Christians following their Lord. It is to these points, accordingly, in which there is an analogy between the case of Christ and that of His people, that Paul adverts. He presents the argument, you remember, very similarly, in calling on the Corinthians to be liberal givers for the relief of the poorer brethren. ‘See that ye abound in this grace,’ he says, ‘for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.’ As, in that passage, he presents voluntary self-impoverishment for the sake of others as the aspect of our Lord’s work of love suitable for his exhortation,—so, in the verse before us, somewhat more generally, seeing that self-sacrificing love generally is the subject of appeal, the renunciation for our sakes of ineffable greatness and glory is made prominent—His leaving His original divine glory of manifestation and surroundings for the lowness of humanity. The possession of the *natures* of which the manifestations are respectively glory and lowness, is of course implied.

You gather from what has been said, that ‘*form*’ here is to be taken in its widest sense, as the mode in which a nature reveals itself, or has its characteristics exhibited. When we are told, then, that, ‘being’—from eternity—‘in the form of God,’ Christ ‘took upon Him the form of a servant’ of God, the contrast is between the glory of the Supreme King and the lowness of a subject.

The word which our translators have rendered by ‘*robbery*’ is of doubtful interpretation. According to the usage of the Greek language, it may be taken in either of two senses, closely allied, yet giving the clause very different bearings. It may mean ‘the act of grasping,’ or it may mean ‘an object grasped, or to be grasped,’ for acquisition or retention. This double signification may be illustrated by the use of our own

English word ‘capture,’ a word of very similar meaning. We speak of the ‘capture’ of a ship; and again, the crew of the conquering vessel will call the taken ship herself ‘our capture.’ In the vast majority of cases in which words of this kind are employed, the context prevents the slightest risk of ambiguity; but the present happens to be one in which a good consistent meaning, pertinent to the apostle’s purpose, is obtained on either view. Our translators, with many other interpreters, adopt the first sense, ‘the act of grasping;’ and the statement thus yielded is, that ‘Christ, being in the enjoyment of the glory of God, therefore thought it no pillaging or robbery to be equal with God,—but, nevertheless, made Himself of no reputation.’ Here the clause is an amplification of the mention of our Lord’s original dignity, which heightens the force of the subsequent statement of condescension. According to the other use of the word, the statement made is, that, ‘though in the form, or glory, of God, yet He did not reckon this equality with God as an object to be graspingly retained,—or, more generally, ‘did not count it as of supreme importance.’ The work of love seemed to him a greater thing than the manifestation of power and dignity. Here, you observe, the clause, which on the former view continued the statement of the Lord’s original dignity, now introduces the account of His condescension. On the whole, considering the connection in which the apostle makes the statement, and various little points in the mode of expression in the original, it seems to me that the latter sense is that which he intended: ‘Being in the form of God, still He did not consider His being on a parity with God as a possession to be graspingly retained,—or, as of supreme value,—but made Himself of no reputation.’ On this view of the meaning, the phrase ‘*to be equal with God*’ is virtually equivalent to the previous ‘being in the form, or glory, of God.’ On the view adopted by our translators, there seems to be an advance from the idea of ‘form’ to ‘nature.’

On either interpretation of the clause, as you see, the doc-

trine of our Lord's true and supreme divinity is most clearly taught, in the one case expressly, in the other by most distinct implication. That any mere creature should be spoken of as 'in the form of God'—taking these words in any natural or adequate sense—is utterly inconceivable; and to exhibit, as an evidence of sublime condescension, the not reckoning equality of glory with God the Father to be a possession of supreme value, would plainly be totally unmeaning, unless this equality of glory were a true and rightful possession.

'Being in the form of God,' then, 'He yet esteemed not His equality with God as a possession to be graspingly retained; but,' on the contrary, '*made Himself of no reputation*.' Our translators have here slightly paraphrased, the exact meaning of the original words being 'emptied Himself,'—not of the *nature* of God (this is impossible; essentially, everlastingly, He is God), but of the 'form,' the glory in mode of manifestation. The glory in which He had been revealed to angels in heaven,—the glory in which, at times, in His pre-incarnate state, He, under all the economies the Revealer of God, had shown Himself to man, as at Sinai, or to Isaiah, when he 'saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple,'—of this glory He 'emptied Himself.'

This He did by '*taking upon Himself the form of a servant*.' These last words standing in obvious and very striking antithesis to 'the form of God,' we are not to think of the word '*servant*' here as intended to bring before us the humbleness even among men of the position He assumed in this world,—to which He Himself adverts in such statements as 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,' and 'I am among you as he that serveth.' This thought of lowliness among men comes afterwards, as we shall see. At this point '*servant of God*' is the idea, the contrast being simply between the glory which is the 'form,' or manifestation, of the supreme King of the universe, and the lowliness which is the 'form' of a subject or servant of the Divine King.

How the Son of God took the form of a servant the apostle explains in the next clause,—‘*being made in the likeness of men.*’ ‘*Of men,*’ you observe, not ‘*of a man;*’ for the thought of the race, to be whose representative He assumed our nature, is before the apostle’s mind. Again, the humanity of the Saviour was indeed a true humanity, not a mere shadow; but it was not *mere* humanity. To keep the absolute uniqueness of Christ’s Person before our minds, therefore, and thus the thought of His infinite condescending grace, Paul introduces the word ‘*likeness.*’

Thus, dear brethren, we have the mystery of mysteries set before us, ‘without controversy great,’—‘God manifest in the flesh.’ Our Redeemer is ‘God over all, blessed for ever,’ infinite, eternal, immutable,—the I AM, the essentially living One. Take away from our faith the doctrine of our Lord’s true divinity, and our hope of deliverance through Him is found baseless. There could then be no atonement for our sins; for there would be no true right or power of self-surrender for such a work, and no adequate value in the ransom paid. There could then be no trusting to the Saviour’s care, no expectation of His sympathy, no prayer to Him; for there would be no omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and a true Saviour needs all these. But the truth stands fast that ‘The Word was God.’ Yet, ‘being in the form of God,’ He ‘emptied Himself’ of this glory. It is true that in His life on earth He exhibited sublime wisdom, holiness, and power; and that once even in His bodily appearance something of the glory of heaven was revealed, ‘His face shining as the sun, and His raiment white as the light,’—so that the witnesses could testify, ‘We beheld His glory, such glory as beseemed the Only-begotten of the Father.’ Still in His common life it was possible—it was easy—not to see the Saviour’s heavenly beauty and majesty. No visible diadem of celestial glory glittered on His brow, to mark Him out as the King of kings. No jewelled breastplate, with Urim and Thummim,

indicated Him to be the world's great High Priest. 'For our sakes He became poor.' And the obvious evidences of His humanity blinded most men to the significance of His wisdom and character and works. They would not allow the thought to enter their minds, or at least to find permanent lodgment there, that this Man, whose life in many things was so similar to their own,—who hungered and thirsted,—who toiled and grew weary,—who went in and out among them so humanly,—could be essentially, or in any material respect, different from themselves. Most striking is the fact recorded in His history, that until His resurrection His own brothers, who for many years had lived their daily life by His side, did not believe on Him. He 'emptied Himself' of His glory.

But we must pass on now to consider the second fact regarding Him which the apostle mentions. This is that, *as man*, *He went down into the depths of humiliation*: '*And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*' We pass here, you see, to the view of another evidence of our Lord's condescending grace. The first was the incarnation: we come now to the humiliations, even as compared with other men, to which, having assumed our nature, the God-man yielded Himself for our redemption. To the hearts of most Christians, probably of all, this second evidence is even more impressive than the former. In contemplating the incarnation,—the step from the 'form of God' into the conditions of a finite nature,—we cannot see clearly for the glory of the heavenly light. Infinity meets us in the foreground, and thus a haze drapes for us the whole picture of that act of immeasurable moral grandeur. In the life of the man Christ Jesus on the earth, infinity is in the background; and just because He has 'emptied Himself' of His glory, we have more distinct and influential impressions made upon us.

The Lord comes before us now, then, '*in fashion as a man.*' By '*fashion*' are intended outward guise, demeanour, and mode

of life. Still, you observe, as before in the word ‘likeness,’ the apostle would remind us of the uniqueness of the Saviour’s Person. Prominence given to the *similarity* to man, in places where we should expect simple mention of the real humanity, suggests, by contrast, the aspects of *dissimilarity*.

Throughout the whole passage the idea of *visible manifestation* is prominent, the apostle having it before his mind to point to the *evidence* of the Saviour’s self-sacrificing grace. Thus we have already had the ‘*form of God*’ contrasted with ‘*the form of a servant*.’ The same idea appears again here in the somewhat remarkable expression, ‘*being found* in fashion as a man.’ We are led to think of seekers and beholders. When the angels, who from their creation had known Him and worshipped Him ‘in the form of God,’ sought Him at Bethlehem, in the wilderness, or in Gethsemane,—in what condition did they ‘find’ Him whom they adored as their Creator, and Sustainer, and King? When we are roused by the Divine Spirit to seek the Light and Life of men, and are thus led to contemplate Jesus with profoundest interest,—what do we ‘find’ in looking at His earthly life? We find no outward grandeur or glory, no abundance of outward comfort. We find one who among His fellow-men was conspicuous as a Sufferer. ‘*He humbled Himself*,’—and this by ‘*becoming obedient*,’ obedient even ‘*unto death*,’ and that ‘*the death of the cross*.’

The fact that the God-man became ‘*obedient*’ to God, proves of itself, even were there no other evidence, the reality of His humanity. Subjection, dependence, is conceivable only in a created nature. This expression brings the suitableness of the Lord’s conduct as an *example* clearly before us, too. What He did and bore on earth, He did and bore as a *servant of God*, —a member of the class to which all Christians profess to belong.

Consider, then, to what the spirit of obedience led our Fore-runner. And, in doing this, bear in mind the truth which, as we have just seen, is implied in His being obedient—a truth

which, I fear, is often but very dimly before us,—that He was a *real* man,—that He felt pain as really as you and I do,—that the wants caused by poverty were as real privations and trials for Him as they would be to you and me,—that He yearned for the love and esteem of his fellow-men as you and I do, and this with a purity and unselfishness of interest in absolute perfection, of which there is often sadly little in our hearts. Having this nature, then, Christian brethren, ‘the Man, God’s Fellow,’ was a ‘Man of Sorrows.’ How manifold were the springs of distress which showed themselves in His experience ! Poverty and hardship, hatred and contempt, bereavement by death, and yet sorer bereavement by desertion, of dear and trusted friends, —what source of human sadness was wanting to Jesus, except a consciousness of sin ? In the pathetic language of prophetic Scripture, ‘He became a stranger unto His brethren, and an alien unto His mother’s children. Reproach broke His heart, and He was full of heaviness ; and He looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but He found none. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He was despised and rejected of men, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.’

And, after thus suffering, He *died*. He who was ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ received the ‘wages of sin.’ The Prince of life yielded up His life. And this by ‘*the death of the cross.*’ Of all the modes of inflicting death which the ingenuity of cruelty has devised, crucifixion is one of the most painful—perhaps absolutely the most painful. From descriptions and pictures, all of us are, to some extent, acquainted with the nature of this punishment. The cross consisted of a strong upright post, not so high as is generally represented in pictures, —not more than from six to seven feet,—with a transverse beam near the top, and a small projecting piece about half-way up. To this cross, probably after it had been placed in the ground, the condemned person was secured ; being made to rest in a measure on the middle projection, with his hands fastened to

the transverse beam by large bolts or nails driven through them ; and, in the case of our Lord at least, though the general usage is somewhat uncertain, the feet also were similarly nailed. The partial resting of the body on the projection I have mentioned, somewhat lessened the torture which would have been occasioned by the suspending of the whole weight on the nails driven through the hands ; but made it more lingering. From this account it will be plain that this mode of death was one of intense and protracted anguish. An interesting and impressive relic of the feelings of old times regarding the physical suffering caused by crucifixion is found in our own language ; for when, to express the utmost intensity of pain, we select the word ‘excruciating,’ as the very strongest our tongue supplies, we are, according to the etymological meaning of the word, likening the pain to that endured upon a cross. No vital organ being directly injured in this mode of punishment, death was commonly slow, awfully slow ; whilst the laceration of parts so exquisitely sensitive as the hands and feet, the pressure on the wounds, and the rapidly increasing fever of the whole system, caused unutterable agony. And this, men and brethren,—this your divine Saviour endured for you. Oh that every one of us were enabled to join, with all the energies of his being, in that richest, deepest tone of the loving praise of heaven,—‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing !’

Besides its painfulness, crucifixion was a punishment to which the idea of *disgrace* attached also in a particular degree. The Jews regarded a crucified person as *accursed*. It is true, indeed, that in their own penal code this cruel punishment had no place, nor any at all resembling it. Had Jesus suffered directly under a Jewish sentence, His death would have been by stoning. But, with them, after stoning, the corpses of the very worst of malefactors were suspended publicly on a tree or post ; and crucifixion was regarded as equivalent to an exposure

of this kind,—an exposure which was held to be a public declaration that the curse of God had come down on a rebel against His law. Thus, my brethren, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being *made a curse* for us ; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.’ Among the Romans also, by whom our Lord was crucified, this punishment was regarded as utterly ignominious and degrading. In their use it was all but exclusively limited to slaves,—a class by them, as generally by slave-holding nations, looked upon with the utmost contempt, as scarcely at all possessed of the rights, or entitled to the sympathies, of humanity. Thus, in being condemned to the cross, Jesus was held up as an outcast from society,—‘a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people.’ I can hardly help thinking that before Paul’s mind, as with adoring wonder he wrote his ‘even the death of the cross,’ the contrast between his own position and the Saviour’s was prominent. By Roman law, under no circumstances could a Roman citizen be crucified. ‘Let the very name of the cross,’ says Cicero in one of his speeches, ‘be far away, not only from the body of Roman citizens, but from their very thoughts, eyes, ears.’<sup>1</sup> Now Paul was a Roman citizen. In the very town to which he was now writing, his citizenship had brought him the amplest apologies from the magistrates for having even beaten him with rods. And to the shameful punishment of the cross, which no man in the world would dare to inflict on him,—him whom his profoundly tender conscience called ‘the chief of sinners,’—to that the holy Son of God had humbled Himself for his redemption. ‘Behold what manner of love !’

The thought of the *condescension* in which the Saviour’s love revealed itself being before the apostle’s mind throughout the whole passage, he gives prominence to the spirit of *obedience* in which He suffered : ‘He *became obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross.’ In His voluntarily assumed position as ‘a

<sup>1</sup> *Pro Rab.* 5.

servant' of God, He had a great work assigned Him ;—and 'He was faithful to Him that appointed Him.' 'His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him.' His whole life was one unbroken act of obedience, 'fulfilling,' as the representative Man, 'all righteousness.' And since, of His appointed work, dying constituted an essential part—dying on the cross,—He shrank not even from this. He 'had a baptism to be baptized with,' and He 'was straitened till it was accomplished.' The aspiration of His soul was ever, 'Not My will, but Thine, be done ;' and, whithersoever the path led which God had marked out for Him, 'He stedfastly set His face to go,'—even to the darkness of Gethsemane, to the pain and shame and dreary desolation of Calvary. Then, at last, came the cry of triumph, 'It is finished.'

This brings us to the third fact regarding the Saviour, of which the apostle makes mention—namely, that *in reward of His obedience He was crowned with glory and honour*: 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' The ancient oracle has been fulfilled, 'Behold, My Servant shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high.' 'The God of peace hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,' 'and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet.' The Father, who in the economy of redemption represents the majesty of the Godhead, has invested the Mediator with this glory and power, in attestation of perfect satisfaction with the work of atonement,—and for the carrying out to completion of the great purposes of His grace, through the mission of the Spirit, and the providential adminis-

tration of the affairs of the world with a view to the triumph of the gospel. In the connection, however, in which the apostle introduces his statement of the Lord's exaltation here, as part of an enforcement of the precept of the 4th verse, he is evidently looking to Him specially as our *Forerunner*,—his immediate design being to exhibit this general principle of the divine government, that God marks and rewards all subjection of the heart to the spirit of self-sacrificing love and holy obedience. He who was ‘in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.’ ‘We see Jesus for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.’

By ‘name,’ in this passage, is meant, according to a most natural and familiar usage, ‘title and dignity.’ We say of John Howard, that by philanthropy he has gained for himself an undying ‘name.’ ‘The word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David, My servant, Thus saith the Lord, I have been with thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth’ (1 Chron. xvii. 8). The universal confession spoken of in the 11th verse, ‘that Jesus Christ is Lord,’ makes it not improbable that, in employing the word ‘name,’ the apostle had in his mind the title of ‘Lord,’ as summing up the authority and glory to which the Saviour was raised. Similarly, you remember, Peter, in the great sermon at Pentecost, called upon ‘all the house of Israel’ to ‘know assuredly that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both *Lord* and Christ.’ This name ‘is above every name.’ Our Redeemer’s position and glory are infinitely higher than that of the very highest of mere created beings. ‘To which of the angels said God at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?’

The purpose of God, in bestowing this power and glory, was ‘that at (more exactly, “in”) the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under

the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' The expression '*in the name*', often used in Scripture in various connections, has some variety of signification. The general idea, however, is '*in recognition or acknowledgment*' of him who is named,—the name being, so to speak, the element or atmosphere within which an act referred to is performed, or a command put forth as authoritative. When David says, 'O God, Thou art my God; I will lift up my hands in Thy name,'—his meaning plainly is, 'Recognising in Thee the only God, the only Fountain of life and strength and joy, I will raise my hands to Thee in prayer.' To the lame man at the gate of the temple Peter said, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk,'—that is, '*Acknowledging Him as the Source of the power which is about to be manifested, I give thee this command.*' Similarly, in the passage before us, '*Every knee*' is to '*bow*' in profoundest homage, '*in recognition of the power and majesty of Jesus.*' The name '*Jesus*' has manifestly a special force here, through the contrast between its former association with lowliness and suffering—its former subjection to derision and scorn,—and the present glory of Him who bears it. 'The stone which was set at nought of the builders, is become the head of the corner.'

By the rendering of our translators, '*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,*' is set forth the subjection to Christ of the whole universe—all the creatures of God, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate. In some form, all of them shall acknowledge His sway. In the same way, the Psalmist calls upon every thing that God has made—'*the angels, the sun and moon, stormy wind fulfilling His word, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, young men and maidens, old men and children*'—to '*praise the name of the Lord.*'<sup>1</sup> The bold figure, too, of the inanimate creation '*bowing the knee,*' has

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxlviii.

Old Testament analogies, in ‘the floods’ and ‘the trees of the field’ ‘clapping their hands.’<sup>1</sup> This wide view of the meaning of the apostle’s statement gives a perfectly clear and satisfactory sense. His reference, however, may be to *moral* beings merely,—‘of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth.’ The *conscious* acknowledgment of Christ which appears to be most naturally suggested by the second part of the statement, ‘that every tongue should confess,’ renders this view perhaps on the whole the more probable. In this case, if the language be other than a rhetorical expansion—not intended to be pressed in its details—of the general idea ‘moral beings everywhere,’—we must think, under the various classes respectively, of angels and the spirits of departed saints, of men still living on earth, and of Satan and his hosts, and the souls of lost men, whose appointed abode is ‘the abyss.’<sup>2</sup> Willingly or unwillingly—through joyful surrender to His grace, or through the experience of His wrath and the conviction of utter overthrow—all moral beings, in heaven, and earth, and hell, shall ‘bow the knee’ to Christ, and ‘confess Him to be Lord.’

In the 10th and 11th verses there is a distinct allusion to a passage in Isaiah,—‘Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth,—I have sworn by Myself, that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear’ (Isa. xlvi. 18, 23). The application of such words to Jesus, by an inspired servant of Him who says, ‘I am the Lord; that is My name; and My glory will I not give to

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xciii. 8; Isa. lv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Luke viii. 31; Rev. ix. 11. For ‘the deep’ of the English Version, in the former of these passages, and ‘the bottomless pit’ of the latter, and of several other places in Revelation, the word in the original is the same,—that from which our English ‘abyss’ comes. ‘The deep,’ in Luke, is far from a happy translation, as hiding the connection with the fuller teaching of Revelation on the subject, and probably suggesting to many readers an unreal connection with the subsequent fate of the swine, which perished in ‘the deep’ of the lake.

another,' is a most explicit testimony to the supreme divinity of our Lord.

But since, in the economy of redemption, the Son is subject to the Father, the grand end of the universal homage to Jesus is '*the glory of God the Father.*' The Lord's own prayer was, 'Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.' To no other end *can* the Absolutely Wise and Holy One work, than the manifestation of His own excellences, and their recognition by His moral creatures,—for in this is summed up all good. The creation, maintenance, and administration of the universe are 'for His own glory.' But unspeakably the fullest exhibition of His excellence is in the provision which He has made for saving sinful men, through the mediation of His Son. Here His wisdom and His holiness, His justice and His love, shine forth in unparalleled splendour. The subjection of all creatures, therefore, to the authority of the Mediator between God and men, and the triumphant testimony thus given to the complete success of the mediation,—this most signally redounds to the glory of Him who 'so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son' to be its Redeemer.

Looking back now over the whole of this wonderful paragraph, you see its sublime fitness to serve the purpose of illustration and argument which immediately led to its introduction by the apostle. In the first verses of the chapter he had appealed, with intense earnestness, to his dear spiritual children at Philippi, to 'increase and abound in love, one toward another,' shunning factiousness and self-seeking, and cultivating a sincere and tender regard for the interests of their brethren. This appeal is taken up again in the 5th verse, and sent home with transcendent power to the heart and conscience of every believer: '*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,*—who, being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross;—*all from love to you.* 'If, to save you, He thus

humbled Himself, is it not most reasonable that you, His brethren, blessing Him for His love, should yourselves show to each other the same spirit of true and self-sacrificing affection ?'

All conceivable intensities and activities of love are summed up in the record of the work of Christ, 'who gave Himself for us.' 'Hereby perceive we love,'<sup>1</sup> because He laid down His life for us,—and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' These words of the Apostle John are evidently, in substance, equivalent to Paul's here ; for self-sacrifice is the central element referred to in '*the mind which was in Christ Jesus.*' Believers are not unfrequently invited by their Lord, in His providence, to place themselves in positions where they may be called on literally to 'lay down their lives for the brethren.' And, blessed be God, not a few Christians, all down the history of the church, have been ready to respond to the summons. John Howard, voluntarily making a voyage in a plague-ship, and taking up his abode in a plague-hospital, with the full expectation of death, but in the hope that, by carefully noting the peculiarities of the disease, and leaving papers on the subject, he might provide the physicians of Europe with materials which would perhaps enable them somewhat to stay the ravages of the awful destroyer,—is, in his grand self-forgetfulness, the type of a glorious band whom God has strengthened. Many a humble man and woman, who, simply through the impulse of Christian love, have, at imminent risk to their own lives, cared for their brethren, by nursing them in infectious diseases, or bringing them aid in other circumstances of peril,—many such, 'never heard of half a mile from home,' will be honoured by the Master 'in that day' with a smile of

<sup>1</sup> Our translators render this passage (1 John iii. 16), 'Hereby perceive we the love of God.' The last two words are a supplement, unnecessary and not very happy. The apostle's thought seems to be, 'In this we have the knowledge of love'—of the nature and working of this heavenly spirit.

specially tender love, as He says to them, ‘Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.’

Apart, however, from calls to self-devotion, even to death, in such ways as I have indicated,—calls which, of necessity, come but occasionally in most lives,—opportunities present themselves continually for some self-surrender in the cause of love, some sacrifice of time or ease or personal inclination. So far as his own conscience was concerned, it was to Paul a matter of indifference what he ate or drank ; yet, as you remember, he says, ‘If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.’ Here, in regard to what might seem comparatively trifling, was real self-sacrifice for love’s sake,—the working of the same ‘mind which was also in Christ Jesus.’ Similarly, my brethren, let ours be the love which ‘seeketh not her own.’ If there be anything in your daily life or mine calculated to lead others astray,—if, by some sacrifice of personal ease or liking, we can alleviate any distress of others, remove any stumbling-block out of their way, or gain any true good for them,—let us not hesitate to follow the dictate of the royal law of love. Our natural selfishness will often struggle vigorously with the impulses of conscience ; yet, if our souls at all ‘prosper and be in health,’ one thought will tell in the controversy with ever fuller power,—‘If my Saviour died for me, surely I may, in some small measure, die daily in self-denial for my brethren.’

## XIII.

## WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION.

‘Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling : 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.’—PHIL. ii. 12, 13.

THE profoundly interesting and important doctrinal passage just examined has been introduced by the apostle, as we have seen, for the purpose of enforcing some advices which he had given regarding religious feeling and conduct. In the verses now before us he resumes his strain of practical counsel,—which all his candid readers are prepared, through the impressiveness of the great truths he has so eloquently recalled to their minds, to receive with peculiar readiness of spirit.

Yet, however ready they be, the work of persistent effort after holiness is a hard one, and most repulsive to the old nature, which still, even in believers, has lamentable strength. Observe, then, how affectionately and winningly the apostle leads his dear Philippians to the view of their duty. He calls them ‘*my beloved*,’ a name which must have carried to their hearts a strong argument for thoughtfulness and diligent attention to his counsel. He stimulates them, too, by a kindly mention of the fact that, in past days, they had ‘*always obeyed*’ him, or rather Christ speaking through him. In the designation ‘beloved,’ and in this pleasant reminder of former fulfilment of duty, their hearts could not but recognise a powerful appeal to this effect,—‘Bethink you of your spiritual father’s

long, warm, unchanging interest in you, and of his unwearied and self-sacrificing exertions for your welfare. Remember the stripes, and the inner prison, and the stocks. Think of the affection which now, in the midst of his own anxieties and sufferings as a prisoner in Rome, has led him to write to you, that you may be quickened and comforted. Let his love appeal to you with power, on behalf of a continuance of that spiritual diligence, your habitual exhibition of which, hitherto, in obedience to his precepts, has been so pleasing to him.'

Such a sketch as the apostle has given of the humiliation and the glory of the Lord Jesus, supplies an argument of intense and manifold cogency in support of any appeal to the believing heart to follow Him. It was immediately to illustrate self-sacrifice for the sake of others that the apostle spoke of the great 'mystery of godliness;' and even had such not been the connection, no Christian could ever read how 'He who was in the form of God made Himself of no reputation, and, being found in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' without having this thought prominent in his mind,—'and all this was in self-sacrifice *for me.*' The glad tidings of the Saviour's glory, too,—of the 'name which is above every name,'—have this thought for the essence of their gladdening power,—'This also is *for me;* because He liveth I shall live, rejoicing in His glory, and, through His measureless grace, taken to sit with Him in His throne.' The remembrance of His love sweetly constrains us to long to do His will; and the thought of Him as our Fore-runner, who has passed through the struggles of earth to triumph and blessedness, and from the scene of His glory cares tenderly for us, gives the richest encouragement in effort to do His will. No '*wherefore,*' then, could be more natural—none to a thoughtful follower of Christ could be so effective,—as that with which the apostle here introduces his practical counsel. The form of the precept, too, accords in a singularly

complete way with the nature of the argument. A very broad surface is so exposed, that the ‘wherefore’ presses upon it with full power at every point. The Son of God, by His incarnation and sufferings and death, meritoriously wrought out salvation for you; and now, seated on the mediatorial throne, He looks down on you with brotherly affection, and is willing to do everything which is needful to bring you into the full enjoyment of salvation. Surely, then, if He has thus cared, and still thus cares, for you, it is most reasonable that you should care for yourselves,—most reasonable that, alike from grateful love to Him, and from regard to your own highest interests, you should, in the appointed way of persistent faith and prayer and struggle with temptation, ‘work out *your own* salvation.’

The injunction, ‘*Work out your own salvation*,’ does not mean, ‘Elaborate for yourselves a righteousness such as shall deserve heaven,—by expiation, by obedience, earn for yourselves salvation as your wages.’ This is impossible work,—altogether hopeless. Blessed be God, it is work which there is no need to attempt. ‘By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.’ ‘The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Yet, with the most abundant evidence present that a ‘sure foundation’ has been laid, and that ‘other foundation can no man lay,’ in how many ways does the proud heart of man, averse to accepting ‘the righteousness of God which is by faith,’ endeavour to ‘work out salvation’ in this sense—‘to lay another foundation’—to make eternal life wages instead of a gift. All down the ages, brethren—with system and against system—amid Pharisaic and Roman Catholic avowals and amid Protestant denials—how abundantly formalism has been accepted as a basis for the hope of heaven! By tithing mint and anise and cummin, and frequently washing the hands,—by pattering over some Latin words, and wearing a shirt of coarse hair,—by sitting in a pew on a Sabbath, and at certain seasons going through the

outward rites of what, to the true believer in Christ, is the communion,—vast multitudes have ever been persuading themselves that by means like these they are purchasing the favour of God. The creed of their lips may speak of salvation through grace, but the creed of their hearts acknowledges only salvation through works. Of all such foolish ones, the Lord Jesus has exhibited a representative in the man who prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.’ You know the issue. He went down to his house unjustified. ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.’ The prayer acceptable in His sight is, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’ ‘For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’

In order to see what Paul does mean by the precept under consideration, it is needful to have clearly before us *the Bible idea of salvation*. By nature, through the belief of what is false regarding the matters on which it is of supreme importance that he should know and believe what is true, man’s affections are alienated from God and holiness, and with his alienated affections his life accords. This is spiritual death ; and the legitimate end of it is ‘the second death.’ Now the salvation offered to us in Christ Jesus is deliverance from all this,—from ignorance, from depravity, from the wrath to come. Salvation, then, you observe, whilst in its fulness a future blessing, is in its beginnings a blessing of the present ; and no one who has not these beginnings here, in ‘a clean heart’ and a life of obedience through the constraint of the love of Christ, has any ground to look for the full salvation by and by. It is of altogether inestimable importance, Christian brethren, that we have clear views on this subject. Salvation does not mean merely the enjoyment of heaven after death ; nor, looked at as a present blessing, merely the comfort which springs from the expectation of heaven after death. Unspeakably precious as these are, yet the sublimest element in Christ’s salvation, the grandest boon which even God can bestow upon His

creatures, is conformity of spirit to His will—likeness of character to Him. This belongs, essentially and prominently, to the scriptural idea of salvation. Yet how seldom, comparatively, do we look at this aspect! If asked what was the object of our Lord's sufferings and death, would the answer that occurred first to us, as if springing from a heart which cherished the thought as its most precious treasure, be that it was to make us holy, ‘to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works’? I fear that with many this would come in, if at all, only in a secondary way. We know, indeed, that Christ Jesus was manifested to destroy *all* the works of the devil; but often the chords of our souls vibrate far more sensitively to the touch of the thought of peace, than to that of the thought of holiness. Our moral perceptions have been so dimmed by the fall, that even when divine grace has given us the heavenly eye-salve, we are slow in coming to see clearly how awful, how utterly monstrous, a thing sin is. But the light does grow brighter for all true believers. The repulsiveness of sin is more distinctly seen. The longing for holiness increases in intensity. Blessing God not less ardently than at the outset of his Christian life, for the assurance that Christ ‘hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,’ the believer learns to feel also with growing intelligence and intensity the sweetness of the assurance that ‘His name is called Jesus, because He saves His people *from their sins*.’ Among all the hopes respecting the future life, this becomes more definitely and steadily the supremely influential, that, ‘when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.’ ‘And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth Himself, even as He is pure.’

It is of the highest moment, however, to bear in mind that whilst the measure in which the two grand spiritual elements of salvation are enjoyed and rightly appreciated by Christians is far from uniform, yet in every Christian, from the moment of his experiencing the new birth, both are present; and the only

trustworthy evidence of a man's being in Christ, and therefore having a real basis for *peace*, is his being, in character, *like Christ*. The same faith which justifies, sanctifies. The faith which introduces to eternal life is itself vital, and reveals its life by *works*: 'Wherefore, work out your own salvation.'

In the injunction before us, the apostle assumes that his readers have in truth, according to their profession, accepted Jesus as their Saviour. The whole Epistle is addressed to '*the saints in Christ Jesus*, which are at Philippi.' To unconverted Jews the Lord Himself on one occasion, you remember, employed the word 'work' in connection with the attainment of salvation, but in this way: 'This is the work of God,'—regarding which they had put a question to Him,—'*that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent*.' That is the first lesson in the school of spiritual wisdom. In the passage before us, as I have said, Paul assumes that the first lesson has been learned, and that his readers are '*in Christ*' through faith. His teaching here—the second lesson—relates to the needfulness of bearing in mind the inexpressible importance of the moral element in salvation, and strenuously exerting ourselves, through prayerful, resolute, persevering effort in resistance to temptation, and in the prosecution of God's service, *to carry forward to completeness the likeness of character to God which has begun to be formed in us*. These last words, I think, exhibit in a paraphrase the apostle's meaning in '*Work out your own salvation*,' if I rightly apprehend it.

Analyzed, the injunction calls upon us to *study the will of God*, that, by thoughtfulness and inquiry regarding Christian duty, we may see ever more clearly the grandeur of our vocation, and keep its sublime aims steadily before us. It calls on us to '*fight the good fight of faith*' valiantly,—to prove, in action, our understanding of this paradox, that by none is the spirit of the gospel of peace truly apprehended, in whom its energy is not revealed as a gospel of war, war without compromise or cessation, against all seducing and perverting influences,—to

'put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' It calls on us, too, *to carry the war into the enemy's domain*,—to be diligent in effort to extend the kingdom of Christ, by striving, as far as our powers and opportunities permit, to strengthen Christian brethren, to instruct the ignorant, and warn the unwary, to leave the world holier and happier than we found it.

While thus enjoining here, in the widest way, the cultivation of holiness, the apostle had also, I think, a *special* Christian duty before his mind. It was, you remember, whilst setting forth the importance of active and self-sacrificing affection among Christians, that he was led, by way of enforcement, to remind his readers of the great example of such love, in the life and death of our Saviour. In the 14th verse, which immediately follows the passage at present before us, we have the same subject referred to,—'Do all things without murmurings and disputings.' Clearly, therefore, as it seems to me, he had it prominently in his thoughts in writing the present intermediate precept also, and would suggest to us here that brotherly love is a most important element of spiritual life—of 'salvation' on its moral side. This is gospel teaching everywhere. 'God is love,' and Christians prove themselves His children by bearing His image. A man destitute of love is as yet unsaved. 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.'

An apt illustration of the two points on which thus far I have had occasion to speak, the impossibility of 'working out our own salvation' in one sense, and the needfulness of doing this in another sense, is afforded by the history of the rescue of Israel at the Red Sea—a rescue in which the thoughtful Christian recognises distinctly a typical sketch in outline of his own spiritual deliverance. By the wilderness, and the mountains, and the sea, the people are shut in; and behind them is Pharaoh in close pursuit, with his great and well-equipped army. If we look simply at man's valour or wisdom, resistance and escape are equally and utterly hopeless. The cry of Israel

to Moses is, ‘Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?’ But Moses said to them, ‘Fear ye not: stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you to-day. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.’ At this point, you observe, they are called to be simple *spectators* of ‘the salvation of the Lord,’ looking on with adoring wonder at the mighty work which only the Divine Hand could accomplish,—the opening of a pathway for them through the midst of the great waters. But afterwards, for the ‘Stand still and see,’ comes a command to display energetic activity. ‘The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea.’ So with you and me, dear brethren. The expiation of guilt, ‘the working out of our salvation’ meritoriously, could be achieved only by the God-man; and our part is to ‘stand still,’ and ‘behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ But now when, by the Lord’s propitiatory sufferings and death, a way, broad and clear, has been opened for us through the midst of the waters of avenging judgment, His command, loud and explicit, to every one of us is that, by persistent, growing faith and holiness, we ‘go forward.’

To his precept, ‘Work out your own salvation,’ the apostle attaches two hints in regard to the manner in which, if there is to be success, the effort to obey it must be made. In the first place, the work must be carried on *perseveringly, under all circumstances*,—‘not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.’ We naturally read these words in our version in connection with ‘as ye have always obeyed;’ but the more probable connection, judging both from the sense, and from the particular negative particle employed in the original, is with the precept,—thus, ‘Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed—so, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation.’ ‘When I was with you, your respect and love for your teacher naturally

pleaded with you to follow that course of life which you knew to be pleasing to him. But, in truth, what *I* think of you is a very small matter. The relations of highest importance are between you and *God*. I am now absent from you, but He is always with you. By faithful and earnest persistence in well-doing, then, show that not only, or mainly, regard for me is powerful in your hearts, but reverence and love for Him. And seeing that you have not now the impulse and help given by my presence and teaching, be all the more thoughtful and watchful.' The observation of all of us, brethren, shows this hint of the apostle to his friends in Philippi to be one which, in some form, is always needed. Ah, what multitudes who, when influences around were favourable, seemed steadily enough setting their faces Zionward, have, when placed in other circumstances, turned back to destruction ! How many boys and girls, who, in their quiet Christian country homes, felt an interest in the gospel, and in the service of Christ, have, when removed to the temptations of a city, forgotten that, though the eye of their pious father or mother was no longer upon them, yet God saw them ; and have entered the paths of the destroyer, growing reckless of character, reckless of eternity ! How needful for us to have ever before our hearts the remembrance that 'he that endureth *to the end* shall be saved,' and he only !

But further, the apostle calls on his readers to 'work out their own salvation' *with anxious solicitude and self-distrust*. This, judging from his use of the expression in other places, is pretty exactly what he means by '*with fear and trembling*' . He would not have Christians walk in the darkness of sorrow, and dread, and all but despondency. His teaching everywhere, and specially in this Epistle, is the very reverse,—that we should be children of light, and peace, and joy. The '*fear and trembling*' he desires to see, then, are such as are perfectly compatible with obedience to his precept elsewhere in the Epistle,—'Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.'

Indeed, they stand in the relation of handmaids to this joy. If a man attempt to 'work out his salvation' in a spirit of self-dependence—of confidence in his own strength or wisdom,—there will certainly be failure, and lack of spiritual peace. Where there is a deep sense of the greatness of the work and of personal insufficiency for it, and the vigilance and prayerfulness which such a conviction is fitted to awaken,—there we have the apostle's 'fear and trembling.' A soul thus exercised 'rejoices alway' in the midst of its fear,—'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind, through Christ Jesus.' 'Watch and pray,' therefore, brethren, 'that ye enter not into temptation.' 'Seeing that ye call on a Father who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear'—'fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.'

By his introductory '*Wherefore*,' Paul had referred to the history of the Saviour's work of love, as exhibiting a most powerful argument in support of the precept, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' In the 13th verse the precept is followed up by the presentation of another argument closely allied, and not less cogent, found in the fact that God is the Author and Sustainer of all spiritual life; '*for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure.*' Our translators have here needlessly weakened somewhat the expression of the thought, by using different words, '*work*' and '*do*', whilst in the original the same verb, one kindred to that in the previous verse rendered '*work out*', is employed. The apostle's statement is, '*It is God which worketh in you both to will and to work.*'

The teaching of Scripture everywhere is, that men are by nature destitute of spiritual energy, power to love God and to desire to do His will. We are in bondage to depravity. 'Whosoever committeth sin,' said the Master, 'is the *slave* of sin.' According to another figure, even stronger, we are by

nature ‘dead in trespasses and sins,’—as utterly incapable of holy activity as a corpse of moving its limbs and doing the work of life. But the believer in Christ Jesus loves God, desires to serve Him, does serve Him. This is ‘glorious liberty,’ ‘eternal life.’ Now this spiritual energy possessed by the man who has the faith of the gospel, is wholly from God. ‘Faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.’ Not merely has He given us the gospel, but, by an influence graciously exerted on the soul, He sends home the conviction that the gospel is true. The Bible contains a full and clear communication of His will regarding everything which we need to know for salvation; and the evidence that it is His word is such as will convince any mind truly candid: but by nature our souls, instead of being candid, are so beclouded by wilful prejudice, that, left to ourselves, no one of us would with seriousness and openness of heart consider the truth. We have mental faculties sufficient to apprehend the meaning of the Bible, and the force of the proof that God is its Author; but the alienated will refuses to bring these into play on the subject. But God, through His Spirit, induces men to examine and think honestly,—to see the truth and feel its force. Thus He ‘breathes into us the breath of life.’ And the life He gives is sustained also constantly and solely by Him. Spiritually, as physically, ‘in Him we live and move and have our being.’ He ‘worketh in us to *will*’ that which accords with *His* will. But even when enabled to ‘will,’—‘how to *perform* that which is good we find not.’ The old nature impedes us, and throws up stumbling-blocks at every turn. ‘We are not sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves.’ But our gracious Father ‘worketh in us to *work*.’ Knowledge and wisdom, resolution and power to resist, resolution and power to wage war against the wickedness of the world, and to do somewhat for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom,—these He gives. ‘Our sufficiency is of God.’

He does these things ‘*of His good pleasure*,’—‘in fulfilment

of His free sovereign purpose of grace.' The ultimate cause of the enjoyment by Christians of spiritual life, is His spontaneous kindness. There is nothing in us by nature to attract the affectionate interest of a holy Being, everything to avert it. Death is wages, fully earned ; but 'eternal life is the *gift* of God,' the gift of free grace. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world ; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will :' 'that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord.'

The '*For*,' by which the apostle connects this verse with the precept of the preceding, shows us the legitimate bearing on man's conduct of the truth that, for the origination and support of spiritual life, we depend absolutely on God. Mere nature is apt to regard the doctrine that strength for holy purpose and action is only from above, from Him who 'worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,' as standing in antagonism to the other doctrine that, if we are to be saved, we must 'strive—agonize—to enter in at the strait gate,' and press along the narrow way. In such a judgment as this, most important elements in the question, relating both to the character of God and the character of man, are left out of view. The light of the Divine Spirit reveals, not antagonism, but the most exquisite accord. His connection is : 'Work ; *for* it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, of His good pleasure.' 'What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' Did the command and its appendix run thus,—'Work out your own salvation, for there is no help from above ; all dependence is entirely on yourselves,'—every man who has real self-knowledge would feel that the case was an utterly hopeless one. Every believer knows from experience that, 'as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide

in the vine, no more can we, except we abide in Christ ; for without Him we can do nothing.' But the assurance that God, the infinitely wise, and powerful, and holy, and loving, imparts to us spiritual wisdom and desires and energies, stimulates to vigorous effort. Hope nerves the arm, and wings the feet. The calm quiet words of the Divine Saviour, ' He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,' are as a well-spring, a brook in the way, to the weary servant of God. A draught of its living water gives him new strength and buoyancy, so that he 'lifts up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.' No thoughts with regard to the Christian life, either in retrospect or in prospect, are more healthful than those which gather round Paul's 'Not I, but the grace of God.'

## XIV.

## LIGHTS IN THE WORLD.

'Do all things without murmurings and disputings ; 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world : 16 Holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.'—PHIL. ii. 14-16.

THE exact connection of thought between the injunction with which this paragraph opens and the preceding passage, is not altogether clear. The view we take of it will be mainly determined by our judgment with regard to the reference of the '*murmurings and disputings*.' These may be against *God*,—the uprising, particularly under persecution, or affliction generally, of a rebellious will, and the intellectual restlessness naturally associated with such rebellion. In this case the connection is with the immediately preceding verse,—the thought of the duty of cordial and entire submission to the will of God, alike with regard to action and endurance, being suggested by the statement there made of our absolute dependence on Him. To this view of the apostle's reference some support is given by an allusion he makes, as we shall see, in the 15th verse, to the wickedness of ancient Israel, whose perversity showed itself most prominently in '*murmurings*' against God. On the whole, however, it seems to me more probable that the precept is a prohibition of '*murmurings and disputings*' against *men*—jealousies and dissensions among the Philippians themselves. This view of the meaning brings the injunction into natural connection with the whole strain of

counsel from the beginning of the chapter. It accords, too, better than the other, as it appears to me, with the prominence given in the present paragraph to the thought of the healthful influence on the world of a holy Christian life; for murmurings and disputings of brethren against each other are observed by those around, and thus obstruct the beneficial power of Christian example, whilst risings of will and thought against God may be secret, and oftenest are.

In '*all things*'—ecclesiastical procedure, ordinary business, social intercourse of every kind—'*murmurings and disputings*' are forbidden, and quietness, gentleness, and courtesy enjoined. The fact that such is a Christian's duty belongs to the elements of religious knowledge,—'*for this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,*' and with love to one another '*murmurings and disputings*' are evidently inconsistent. But ah, brethren, how slow is our progress towards steady obedience! Living in a world where blustering and self-assertion are very largely employed to gain men's ends, and often prove for a time not inefficient aids, how apt even believers are to drift with the current,—to give way to unhallowed tempers,—ay, to bring jealousy and anger into the consideration and discussion of matters immediately concerning the kingdom of God! How apt we are to forget that '*the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God!*' Persistent and prayerful effort to give obedience to the apostle's precept here, by always avoiding arrogant and angry language, would both prevent much injury to the cause of God in the world, and exert a bracing influence on our own spiritual life. Energetic endeavours to keep the *tongue* under restraint, have an invigorating power over the whole nature. A man of violent temper, who, when the gust of passion comes over his heart, has Christian wisdom and power of will enough to '*keep the door of his lips,*' will find, not merely that he is saved from speaking words which might cause him and others sorrow, but that, through prayerful, per-

severing struggles of this kind, the power of the evil spirit within him is broken,—as certainly as, in cases where passion finds free utterance, the power of the demon steadily grows. ‘Do all things,’ then, brethren, ‘without murmurings and disputings.’

The apostle proceeds in the rest of the passage to set forth his object in giving this precept. This was twofold. First and chiefly, that, through adornment with the holy beauties of love, the Philippians might exert a winning influence over the society in which God’s providence had placed them, leading the heathen around to recognise in Christianity ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God.’ Secondly, that, through their growth in Christian loveliness and usefulness, there might be stored up for himself, as their spiritual father, an exquisite joy, to be realized fully in the ‘day of the Lord.’ In mentioning each of these objects, the apostle plainly exhibits a powerful argument for obedience to the precept,—the one addressing itself to the regard felt by the Philippian Christians for the honour of their Lord and the welfare of men, the other to their personal affection for him whom God had made the instrument of ‘turning them from darkness to light.’

The first object is that, by beauty and completeness of Christian character, the members of the Philippian church may act powerfully on the world on behalf of Christ: ‘*that ye may be*’—rather ‘approve yourselves,’ ‘come out’ from the trial which is found in the excitements, irritations, and seductions of the world—‘*blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.*’

Influence on others by example being prominent in the apostle’s mind, he naturally puts ‘*blameless*’ first—‘living a life which no one can justly reproach.’ Yet here, as always, he desires to keep his spiritual children in mind that purity of the *whole* nature, blamelessness through the study and powerful

action of holy *affections*, is alone beautiful in God's sight. He would therefore have them '*harmless*' too,—or rather, '*simple*,' '*guileless*,' '*single-hearted*,' literally, '*free from mixture or adulteration*.' The original word is the same which is rendered by '*simple*' in a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, where Paul says, '*I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil*' (Rom. xvi. 19). Such was Nathanael, of whom the Lord said, '*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*' Very great prominence is given in Scripture to this grace of simplicity, oneness of purpose, directness of aim, freedom from by-ends. In the measure in which the faith of a Christian is lively and intelligent, the will of God, as made known in Scripture, will be his rule of judgment and action, and thus his moral life will be simple and stable. There will be no double dealing either with himself or with the world, but sincerity and candour, his words and deeds according with his real views and feelings. '*Guileless*' and '*simple*' are, in the ordinary use of language among us at present, generally employed in the sense of '*unsuspicious, not given to think evil of others*.' This is included in the Scripture idea of '*simplicity*' of character. Christian love '*believeth all things, hopeth all things*.' The view which we take of the people we meet in the world is not a little due to *reflection*, in the optical sense of the word. We are very apt to think we see in others what we know to be in ourselves; and thus the selfish and deceitful man is much more likely to see selfish and deceitful men around him, than the man in whom divine grace has made loving and truthful. But Christian '*guilelessness*' is perfectly compatible with great shrewdness and sagacity. The believer, while he keeps his own affections and aims single, may see very clearly the duplicity of some with whom he has to do, and guard himself against its effects. He will not wear his heart on his sleeve, for the birds of the air to peck at. He will never consciously say or act that which is false; but he will not open up all his thoughts and feelings to every one.

He will choose his seasons and his listeners. The Lord's precept to His apostles called upon them, whilst being 'harmless'—'guileless,' the same word as that employed in the passage before us—'as doves,' to be at the same time 'wise as serpents.'

The connection between 'simplicity' of spirit and 'doing all things without murmurings and disputings,' is not far to seek. When, in reference to anything, a man shows jealousy and ill-temper, it is made thereby very plain that he has not that entire singleness of aim to do the will of God, to which Christ calls His people. Ah, brethren, if, as the apostle has it in the 2nd verse of this chapter, we 'with accordant souls minded *the one thing*,' to how great an extent would the jealousies and heartburnings which at present disfigure our ecclesiastical and our ordinary social life be mere memories! Controversy, no doubt, is at times lawful and needful; and in some controversies the tones of stern, solemn denunciation ought to be heard. He who is the 'Lamb of God' is no less the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah.' The same voice which said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' said also, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' But this sternness was 'His strange work.' His delight was in the 'still small voice' of pity and grace, as it was foreseen of Him by the prophet,—'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street: a bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.' Let this, too, be the joy and the habitual practice of His brethren!

Continuing his statement of the object he had in view in giving the precept of the 14th verse, the apostle goes on,—'that ye may approve yourselves *the sons*'—or rather, simply, without the article, 'children'—'of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation'—more exactly, 'generation.' The language of this clause is moulded after that of a verse in the great 'Song of Moses,' given in the 32nd chapter

of Deuteronomy. According to the famous Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, which was extensively used in the days of our Lord and His apostles, and which is often quoted in the New Testament, the latter part of the 5th verse of that chapter is rendered in a way of which the translation runs thus, ‘children worthy of rebuke, a crooked and perverse generation.’ Of these words Paul here makes a most interesting and suggestive application. Israel, through covenant privilege God’s ‘children’ in a special sense, and, as such, called upon to exhibit simplicity, uprightness, rectitude of character, the product of a will aiming straight at compliance with the will of their heavenly Father, had, in fact, shown the utmost contortedness; the utmost ‘crookedness and perversity’ of spirit and of life,—a character twisted at all points, through prejudice and aversion to the will of God. They had thus, in truth, lived not as ‘children of God,’ but as depraved, unconverted men, the enemies of God. ‘Now,’ says the apostle to the Philippians, ‘you have all around you the wicked world, to whose ways unhappy Israel conformed,—men and women whose religion is a gross superstition, and their feelings and conduct godless and vicious,—“*a crooked and perverse generation.*” You are placed “*in the midst*” of these men and women of crooked character, that you may set them an example of straightness, holy directness of purpose. As Christians, you enjoy the sublime dignity of being “*children of God.*” See to it, then, that, as such, ye be in all things “*without rebuke,*” so that your character may speak on behalf of God among those who surround you. Israel, called to be children, themselves lived perversely. My earnest desire for you, dear friends, is, that through avoiding murmurings and disputings, and cultivating a spirit of simplicity and gentleness, you may truthfully exhibit the image of your Father, who “is love,” and win men’s hearts to Him.’

This counsel is addressed to you and me, my brethren, as fully as it was to the Philippians. Placed, as really as they

were, ‘in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,’ may we have grace from above to be thoughtful and vigilant, and much given to prayer, that we may approve ourselves ‘children of God without rebuke,’ showing them, clearly and winningly, in blamelessness, earnestness, and beauty of character, our Father’s likeness! By inconsistencies in the life of professed children of God with the obvious moral requirements of the gospel, immeasurable harm is done to religion. When piety seems all reserved for the Sabbath and the sanctuary,—when at home there is harshness, and in business frequent evidence of keen and unscrupulous worldliness,—when the declaration, implied in presence at the communion table, that ‘the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world,’ is followed during the week by a manifestly dominant interest in the vanities and indulgences of the world,—when men and women, who in name ‘fear the Lord,’ in practice ‘serve other gods,’—can the great multitude who, with regard to religion as to everything else, will not study abstract principles, but form their judgments according to embodiments, be expected to think otherwise than that religion is a thing of emptiness, a name merely, altogether devoid of power? ‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.’

The thought of responsibility for the power of example, which, as we have seen, is suggested by ‘in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,’ is explicitly brought out by the apostle in his next clause,—‘*among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.*’ These words may be taken as an injunction, ‘among whom shine ye.’ The view of the meaning given by our translators, however, is at least as natural. Paul appears to be, with a little variation, repeating, perhaps consciously, the statement of the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, where He tells His hearers what is their *calling* as His disciples,—‘Ye are the light of the world’ (Matt. v. 14).

'Being placed,' the apostle says, 'in the midst of godless men and women, you are, according to your profession, the illuminators of these darkened ones, and this by *holding forth to them the word of life* ;—that is, 'by bringing impressively and winningly before them the gospel of Jesus Christ, which, when received by faith into any soul, shows itself the incorruptible seed of true life, even that life eternal, which is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.'

The original word employed by the apostle here for '*lights*' is not the form in ordinary use, but one which strictly means '*light-givers*,' '*luminaries*.' As it is that found in the Greek-translation of the Old Testament, in the 1st chapter of Genesis, for the '*lights* in the firmament of the heaven,' it seems probable that the apostle had this image specially in his mind. The Lord Jesus is our spiritual Sun, the ultimate Source of all our light and heat. His followers, like the moon, can but reflect the light which they receive from the Sun ; yet when, like the moon at the full, they '*walk in brightness*,' the darkness around is helpfully dispelled, and many have cause to '*rejoice in that light*.' To shed this kindly radiance is the vocation of believers. One great end for which, instead of being taken away at once to heaven on accepting Christ, they are left '*in the world*,' is, that the gloom in which sin has enshrouded it may, to some degree, be broken in upon by the beams from their holy character ; and that men may be led by the beauty of the lunar rays to open their minds and hearts to the full glorious light of the Sun. This is our calling, Christian brethren, and in a measure all true followers of the Saviour fulfil it ; for to believe the gospel is to become '*light in the Lord*.' 'But,' as has been finely said, '*it is with believers as it is with the new moon in the heavens*. There is at first only a sharp and narrow surface of light ; and not unfrequently there may be seen, embosomed in the luminous outline, the large dark shadow of the old nature. But the imperfect circle is gradually filled up, till there is presented at last a broad

and complete surface of light. They appear clothed with the sun.<sup>1</sup>

In his statement of the way in which Christians 'shine,'—by '*holding forth the word of life*,'—the apostle passes from the image of the luminary, and adopts one somewhat of this kind,—a herald of the King of kings, holding out to public view a scroll, on which is inscribed, in great letters, a proclamation of mercy, a promise of everlasting life to all that believe in Jesus. The primary reference here is evidently, from the tenor of the whole passage, to that proclamation of the truth and power of the gospel which, to all who are willing in any degree to attend, is made by completeness of Christian character,—by the exhibition of spiritual energy and sweetness and patience. Nothing 'holds forth the word of life' more impressively than a life manifestly governed by that word. A Christian of this type is himself a gospel, an '*epistle of Christ*,' written in letters so large and fair, that even those who run can scarce but read. Such a distinct Christian life, a life explicit and convincing to all observers as a '*confession of Christ*,' is the legitimate fruitage from the seed of truth received by the soul. Scripture knows nothing of invisible religion. '*Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.* Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

But to '*hold forth the word of life*' implies not merely quiet, consistent beauty of character, but definite action for the extension of the kingdom of Christ. Every believer has heard his Father say, '*Son, go work in my vineyard*,' and is in some way busy among the vines. His faith has given him oneness of purpose with Christ,—who died, and who reigns, to overthrow sin. By lip, then, as well as by the eloquence of holy living, the saint endeavours to speak for Christ, as God gives

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Smith, of Biggar.

him ability and opportunity—be it to his little children by his own fireside, or to assembled thousands. He ‘cannot but speak the things’ which grace has taught him, and given him to experience. He delights, too, to send the truth to multitudes whom personally he cannot reach, by aiding in the support of agents for the enlightenment of the darkened at home and abroad. Through them he endeavours to ‘go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,’—and He who ‘seeth the end from the beginning,’ recognises in His servant’s sympathy and prayers and gifts for missions, a true ‘holding forth of the word of life’ everywhere.

Looking back over the clauses, you see now, my brethren, who they are that show themselves ‘children of God without rebuke.’ They are the ‘blameless and single-minded,’ who aim ever to be ‘perfect, even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ Like their Father, too, they are full of the energy of love, ceaseless in beneficent activity, diffusers of genial light and heat, as beseems children of the ‘Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift.’

The passage closes with a reference, most natural and beautiful in the relations which existed between Paul and the Philippians, to his own joy in ministerial success, as an object which he had in view in thus pleading with them to cultivate a lofty Christian character,—an object, too, the thought of which might reasonably be expected, from their great love to him, to serve somewhat as a stimulus to spiritual diligence. ‘Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may approve yourselves children of God without rebuke,—that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.’ The apostle had ‘run’ with the eagerness of a racer at the Isthmian or Olympic games,—the prize he sought, the souls of men. He had ‘laboured’ with strenuous and persevering diligence,—the wages he sought, the souls of men. ‘God grant,’ was ever the fervent cry of the noble heart, full of

love and pity for his fellow-men,—‘God grant that I may not run *in vain*, nor labour *in vain*, but may have abundant cause to *rejoice!*’ He did not look for the joy other than very partially here below. To the eye of men, the results of work for Christ have, at the present, much that is obscure and confused. But ‘*in the day of Christ*’ all will be clear. All the ripe grain will be gathered into the garner of God. Many who below had deemed their work profitless, ‘going forth,’ year after year, ‘weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.’ Of the work of every labourer in the field of the great Husbandman there will then be a full and gracious acknowledgment; and ‘he that sowed and he that reaped shall rejoice together.’ ‘See to it, then,’ the apostle says here to his beloved Philippians, ‘that you give me ever fuller reason to believe that I shall find you on that day where my heart desires to find you, and where the gospel, truly believed and loved, will place you. See to it that, when I rest from my labours, *my works follow me.*’

## XV.

## JOY IN PROSPECT OF MARTYRDOM.

'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.'—PHIL. ii. 17, 18.

THE link connecting these verses with that immediately preceding appears to be of this kind,—'I have spoken of my ministerial life as a *running* and a *labouring* for the salvation of my fellow-men; but think not that I regret this toil. Nay, even though I be called on in this cause to die a martyr's death, I will go forward to it gladly, and call on you, my converts and friends, to rejoice with me.'

The thought of suffering a violent death in the cause of Christ is exhibited under a peculiar form, interesting and beautiful,—'*being offered* (more exactly, "poured out"<sup>1</sup>) *upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.*' With certain of the sacrifices under the law of Moses there was presented also an offering of wine, which was poured on or around the altar. To this usage the apostle makes allusion. The 'faith' of the Philippians he sees lying on the altar of God as a sacrifice. His own exertion for their spiritual good, the 'running' and the 'labouring' which he has just spoken of, is naturally represented as his 'service,' or 'priestly work,' connected with this oblation. It might be the will of God—circumstances seemed to render it not improbable that soon, in His providence, it might be shown to be His will—that, to complete

<sup>1</sup> The same word occurs also in 2 Tim. iv. 6, 'I am now ready to be offered'—'poured forth as a libation.'

the sacrifice, the apostle's blood should be shed in martyrdom ; and he says that, if it should be so, he would make the libation with joy, and trusted that his Christian friends would through grace be enabled to rejoice with him. Such appears to be the thought exhibited in these verses. The idea set forth in our Authorized Version, of the shedding of the apostle's blood as a libation or drink-offering '*upon* the sacrifice,' is distinct and impressive. There is some doubt, however, whether the drink-offerings of the Mosaic ritual were poured *on* the victim. You see, too, that '*sacrifice and service*' stand together. Now it seems impossible to give a definite significance to '*on* the priestly service connected with your faith,' without bringing confusion into the figure. It is probable, therefore, though we give up with reluctance the clear and lively picture suggested by '*upon* the sacrifice,' that the apostle's meaning is rather, '*If in addition to* the sacrifice of your faith, and my priestly service connected with it, I be offered as a libation,'—a rendering which accords with a very frequent use of the original word translated '*upon*.'

Proceeding now to illustrate the apostle's statement somewhat more fully, I invite your attention, in the first place, to the *sacrifice*. The Jewish sacrifices were of two kinds, some intended for propitiation, some to express gratitude. To the latter of these classes only has the self-consecration of true Christians an analogy. Our blessed Lord has, through the offering of Himself, once for all, '*perfected for ever*' all them that put their confidence in Him ; and '*there remaineth*'—there is needed—'*no more sacrifice for sin*.' But '*to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, giving thanks to His name*,' '*to do good and to communicate*,' '*to present our bodies living sacrifices*,' is the duty of all Christians, and their delight in the measure of the intelligence and liveliness of their faith, for '*with such sacrifices*'—sacrifices of gratitude for His infinite love manifested to us in the unspeakable gift of the great propitiatory sacrifice—'*God is well pleased*.'

All sacrifices involve this as one essential element, that some possession deemed valuable is voluntarily given up. In modern use, indeed, apart from the language of theology, this thought is the only one intended when the word is employed,—as, for example, when we say that a man has gained a position of influence by the *sacrifice* of half his fortune, that a kind father has *sacrificed* his time to help his son in his studies, or the like.

The apostle's statement, then, in the words, '*the sacrifice of your faith*,' is, when developed, to the effect that faith in Christ is a voluntary surrender to God, in a spirit of love and thankfulness, of something which by nature we deem very precious. To some it may seem strange to call *faith* a sacrifice. To speak of becoming a missionary to the heathen, or of giving money for religious purposes, as a sacrifice, seems to them an intelligible statement; but scarcely such an expression as we have here. Yet, plainly, the apostle does call faith a sacrifice; and, in truth, my brethren, it is the great fundamental sacrifice made by a Christian. Faith is not love, or zeal, or liberality; but these all arise out of faith, and defect in those sacrifices always corresponds to defect in this. A test is evidently presented here by which we may try what we call and think our faith. A very large number of us consider that we have faith in Christ. Now, can we all deliberately and honestly say that our faith is a *sacrifice*? Do we really in it surrender anything which we greatly valued? Did it cost us a struggle to give God our faith? Does it now cost us a struggle to keep giving God our faith? If we have no consciousness of anything like this, is there not reason to fear that what we call our faith is something distinct in kind from that state of mind and heart in the Philippians of which the apostle here speaks? May we not reasonably suspect that our '*faith*' is but a bare, cold, uninterested assent to doctrine?—something, therefore, which cannot by possibility save; for the faith by which God's grace introduces men into eternal life must be itself an energy of the

soul,—a living power, not a torpor. All faith in Christ worthy of the name, all faith which lays hold firmly of men's affections, and thus becomes the governing power of the soul,—and no other faith than this is saving,—involves struggle. God has provided a Saviour who has done all that was needed to open up a way by which, consistently with the glories of the divine character and administration, mercy might flow forth to man, for pardon and for adornment with spiritual beauty; and He asks from you and me, as our thank-offering for this ineffable manifestation of kindness, childlike acceptance of His gracious declarations, and absolute reliance on Christ. Such faith is a *sacrifice*. There is nothing that the natural heart would not sooner give to God than this; for it involves a renunciation of *pride*, which is the natural heart's dearest possession.

Entering into this part of the subject a little more particularly, which its great importance claims, I observe that true faith in Christ is a sacrifice, inasmuch as it involves *renunciation of the pride of reason*. Our reason loves to elaborate for herself, to combine and compare, to draw conclusions and weave theories; and when she has reached any conclusion which is, or seems, true and important, then, surveying her gains, she delights to say, like Nebuchadnezzar as he looked out upon his palaces and ramparts, ‘Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?’ But the gospel revelation comes, bringing with it sufficient evidence that it is from God, and, as being from Him, not offering itself to our feeble reason to be so dealt with as that we may choose some of its statements and set aside others, and, by combining those we choose, obtain some product which reason may complacently call her own, and rejoice in as water of life drawn by her own hand from her own wells of wisdom and salvation. No,—God’s revelation claims to be *believed*—to have ‘faith’ put in it—simply and wholly.

Again, the principal statements of the gospel are, in them-

selves, of such simplicity that a little child may, in a measure, apprehend them,—in such a measure as intelligently to believe them ; whilst, at the same time, at all points they touch and stretch out into the infinite, so that the boldest and strongest thinker finds himself no more able to comprehend them in all their bearings and ramifications than the little child is.

The absolute authority of the gospel, and its simplicity, and its mysteries, are all hateful to the arrogance of intellect. Faith is therefore a sacrifice.

This particular form of pride naturally takes prominence in proportion to the activity and success of intellectual speculation in other spheres than that of religion ; and at no period, probably, has it been more intense and obvious than in our own day. It has been fostered especially by the amazing progress of the natural sciences. Instead of feeling gratitude to God for the kindness which has led men on to such advances in physical comfort and physical means of usefulness, and being brought to submit all the more joyfully to the rule of the Creator of that nature which we are every day finding to be more and more wonderful, the proud heart of man comes to defy the command, ‘Believe the gospel as a child, and glory in the cross of Christ.’ To the arrogance of intellect it seems hard—unendurable—that the race who, by the skilful and energetic exertion of their powers of mind, have been able to make the elements draw their cars, and carry their messages, and paint their pictures, should, in religion, have simply and implicitly to believe a ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ Ah, brethren, it was the thought that the mystic tree in the garden was ‘to be desired to make one *wise*’—the thought that men might ‘be as gods, knowing good and evil’—which brought about the beginning of sin in the world ; and this same thought has no little part in maintaining sin’s existence and power ! So long as men, seeking after wisdom, fail to see that the only true wisdom for God’s creatures is childlike rest in His wisdom,—so long will the gospel of Christ be to them ‘foolishness.’

Again,—faith in Christ is a sacrifice, because it involves *renunciation of the pride of self-righteousness*. To any one who, with attention and candour, either observes the world, or scrutinizes his own heart, it is plain that there is great proneness among men to dream that they can *earn* eternal life. This tendency, as is natural, is especially strong in the class of persons who, through God's providence, have been by social, educational, and religious influences, fenced in from the commission of gross outward sins. The Pharisees, in our Lord's time, were representatives of great numbers in all ages. The language of the heart in persons situated like ourselves is very apt to be something of this kind, 'I am a respectable industrious man,—I never defrauded any one,—I have no impurity of life to reproach myself with, no cruelty, no oppression,—I am not unkind to the poor,—I attend church regularly, and read the Bible, and train my children to say their prayers, and at the stated seasons partake of the communion ;' and, as we complacently thus recount our excellences to our souls, our inward thought is, 'What more can God reasonably expect?' We do not definitely deny the doctrine of the cross; we have been too well taught from our childhood for that; but we quietly put it away in a corner, never to be looked at, or turned to practical account. You remember the man who stood and prayed, saying, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.' My brethren, we condemn this man, and marvel at his self-ignorance; and, even while thus condemning and marvelling, we are very apt to go and do likewise. Now with such a spirit the gospel of Christ will not suit; for the reality and universality of sinfulness, and of utter inability to satisfy the claims of the divine law,—this, and, by consequence, the absolute gratuitousness of salvation, are of the very essence of gospel doctrine. The very first work of the Divine Spirit, in His function as the 'Comforter,' the Diffuser of true peace, is to 'convince the world of sin.' So long as we reckon ourselves whole, we shall plainly have no care for the help of the great

Physician. So long as we count ourselves ‘just persons, who need no repentance,’ we shall have no real, deep-reaching faith in Christ, or love to Him,—the Christ who ‘died for our sins,’ because sin, our sin, was so evil a thing, and is now ‘exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.’ Ah, brethren, this is one of the great soul-destroyers,—this pride of self-righteousness. To the chief priests and elders of the people, who ‘trusted in themselves that they were righteous,’ Jesus said, ‘Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you,—and this, plainly, simply because these were more open to the sense of sin, and to the conviction that ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,’ was the very Saviour for them. You see that cordial faith in Christ as the Saviour of sinners—of those who merit God’s wrath, and are utterly unable to deliver themselves—is in the fullest sense a *sacrifice*, a surrender of something which the carnal heart reckons very precious.

But yet once more,—faith in Christ is a sacrifice, because it involves *renunciation of the pride of self-will*. To a spirit of arrogant determination to continue sinning, to persist in following our own will instead of submitting to God’s, the gospel, if at all understood, must be an object of intense dislike; for every thoughtful mind feels that, whatever else the cross may mean, it certainly intimates God’s hatred of sin, so that no one can accept salvation through Christ without being led thereby to strive against sin. A religion of decency is popular; but a religion which searches the thoughts and intents of the heart, and has for its aim to purify and elevate these, is hateful to the carnal mind,—and such a religion is Christianity. No man can look at Christ upon the cross without seeing the eyes of the Son of God—‘eyes that are as a flame of fire’—penetrating, burning into his very soul. Our depraved hearts have much ingenuity in explaining away truth, and making it powerless; but wherever the doctrine of Christ is apprehended and believed in its fulness, a stable barrier is thereby raised up in the way of

wilful violation of the law of God. The unconverted gospel hearer feels instinctively that, if he were steadily to contemplate the truth that ‘Christ Jesus gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity,’ he could not be at ease in sin. He feels that faith in Christ is a root from which, inevitably, devotion of life to the service of Christ will spring. Therefore, if he be resolved to cleave to sin, he will, as far as he can, avoid thinking of Christ with anything like fulness or candour, lest he should be led into faith in Him. He will choose the darkness rather than the light, mainly because he does not want to see the cross, and those deep, pathetic, penetrating eyes of the Divine Sufferer, in which shines, indeed, ineffable love to sinners, but absolute and everlasting hatred of sin.

Considering then, brethren, how firm is the hold which these various forms of pride have on us by nature, and that Christian faith involves a renunciation of them all, you see how fitly chosen is the apostle’s language, when he speaks to the Philippians of the ‘*sacrifice* of their faith.’

We must now look at *the priestly ‘service’ connected with the sacrifice*. The New Testament recognises but one priest in the strict sense of the word—the ‘one Mediator between God and men,’ who, through His atoning sacrifice on Calvary, and His intercession in heaven, obtains acceptance for all them who come unto God by Him. In nothing does Popery more distinctly prove itself to be an antichrist, than by ascribing to its ministers the powers of the ‘one Mediator,’ the ‘Priest for ever.’ But, by a figurative application of the name, Christians are sometimes in the New Testament represented as priests, in the general sense of persons solemnly, and by a sacred unction—the ‘unction from the Holy One’—set apart from the world for the service of God. Believers are ‘an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.’ Such a spiritual sacrifice was the ‘faith’ which the Philippians presented to God. In speaking of this faith, however, the apostle, as you see, introduces a variation of the ordinary

figure, to bring out the relation which divine grace had constituted between him and them. His labours and prayers for them had been blessed by God to their conversion, and subsequent advancement in religious knowledge and vigour and happiness. Thus his work had been a kind of priestly service for them. Through the spiritual energy given them from heaven, they brought faith and love as a free-will offering to God; and the apostle's part in the work, his teachings and pleadings and prayers, in the retrospect of which from his prison in Rome his heart found much delight, might be said loosely to correspond with the priestly act of laying the offering on the altar. In his pleadings with them in God's name, and in his pleadings for them with God in prayer, he stood, as it were, between them and God, doing in Christ a priest's work. The apostle employs exactly the same image, in a yet more explicit way, in a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, where he speaks of 'the grace that was given to him of God, that he should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost' (Rom. xv. 15, 16).

Taking Paul as an example, then, you see, Christian brethren, how comprehensive is the work of him who, through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, is anointed a priest unto God. He is called on to present on the altar his whole life, by serving God in personal holiness, and also striving earnestly to bring other men to the Lord, and to help onward his fellow-believers. Our duty is, first, like the Philippians, offering the faith of our minds and hearts, then to 'present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,'—then to consecrate to Him our social influence, and thus, if it please Him to give His blessing, doing, like Paul, priestly service to others. Observe that all this priestly work belongs as a duty to *all* Christians. Each Philippian, as really and as fully as the apostle, was bound to seek the conversion and confirmation of

other souls, and thus ‘present’ them to God. Ministers and other office-bearers in the church of Christ have peculiar opportunities and consequent responsibilities ; but their *priesthood* is only such as is common to all who, having been ‘called out of darkness into God’s marvellous light,’ are thus, most reasonably, set apart ‘to show forth His praises.’ The question of the carnal heart is that of Cain, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ for the tendency of sin is ever to isolate men, and enwrap them in a robe of selfishness. But, Christian brethren, ‘this is the message which you and I have heard, that we should love one another,—not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.’ Wherefore, ‘let him that heareth say, Come,’ remembering that ‘he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.’ ‘They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.’

The apostle thought it not at all unlikely that the course of God’s providence might soon show it to be His will that he should close his ministerial relations to the Philippians and his other converts, by enduring a violent death. This would be, as it were, his ‘*being offered*,’ or ‘*poured forth*,’—the libation, or drink-offering, by which his ‘priestly service,’ connected with their ‘sacrifice of faith,’ should be completed. ‘If it be so,’ he says, ‘and vividly presenting to my mind the prospect, *I joy*.’ How sublime this is ! How magnificent a proof of the sustaining power of Christian faith !—in some respects, perhaps, all the more impressive to a thoughtful mind, from the fact that the apostle was not at the time in immediate and definite anticipation of martyrdom. That after all the fluctuations of thought and feeling regarding possible escape are over, after a servant of Christ is condemned to death for conscience’ sake, and sees the scaffold or the stake now certainly before him, he should be calm, cheerful, thankful and happy,—this bears most

stirring testimony to the Saviour's grace. But to hear, as we do in this passage, a man of transcendent truthfulness, eminently accurate in his knowledge of his own heart, and careful in his choice of language, telling us—while he is still busily occupied with his Master's work—while a violent death, though far from improbable, is still an uncertainty, and therefore he has not as yet been called to rally all the energies of the new nature to support him at the one point of awful trial,—‘If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy,’—the evidence given here of the general sustaining power of faith seems to me almost more striking than that afforded in the other case. William Tyndale, the grandest figure, perhaps, take him all in all, of the English Reformation—a man of Pauline strength of character and singleness of devotion to the work which God had given him to do—suffered martyrdom in circumstances of such seclusion that we know scarcely anything more than the mere fact. But no information of his demeanour in the dungeon of Vilvorde could possibly either tell us more of his character, or speak more weightily for Christ to any one who has ears to hear, than these words, written years before, in his Preface to *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*,—‘Some man will ask, peradventure, why I take the labour to make this work, inasmuch as they will burn it, seeing they burned the gospel. I answer, In burning the New Testament they did none other thing than that I looked for; *no more shall they do if they burn me also*, if it be God's will it shall so be. Nevertheless, in translating the New Testament I did my duty, and so do I now, and *will do as much more as God hath ordained me to do.*’

The sources of Christian ‘joy,’ in the anticipation of martyrdom, are twofold. One is the confident hope of being introduced by death into heavenly blessedness and glory,—for the martyr a blessedness peculiarly exquisite, and a glory peculiarly sublime, seeing that ‘it is a faithful saying, If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.’ In a passage familiar to

us all, and written very shortly before his death, Paul explicitly sets forth the supporting power of the hope of heaven,—‘ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.’ He knew that the executioner could do nothing except to the body, and that the same stroke of the sword by which the body was mutilated, would set the spirit free to go to ‘ be with Christ.’ Another source of joy, even richer and deeper than this, for the believer who looks forward to his being ‘ offered,’ is the knowledge that, in many ways, glory will accrue to God from the martyrdom. Paul felt well assured that thereby ‘ Christ would be magnified.’ The Greeks of old delighted to tell how Phidippides—fleetest of foot among his countrymen—having borne himself gallantly in the great fight at Marathon, darted from the field immediately after victory was secure, ran to Athens, related his tidings to the Fathers of the city, closing with the words, ‘ Rejoice ye, as we rejoice,’ and then, utterly exhausted by wounds and toil, fell down dead before them. The entire sinking of the thought or care of self in joy over the safety and glory of his native land was very beautiful. Yet the noblest feelings which arise out of any of the relations of man to what is earthly and visible, make but a feeble approach to the grandeur of spirit of him who ‘ joys’ to think of dying a cruel death, that the unseen God, the God whom he knows by faith only, may thereby be glorified. Paul believed that ‘ out of the eater would come forth meat ; and out of the strong, sweetness,’—that from the place of his martyrdom there would exhale a rich fragrance of Christ, which would bring spiritual joy to many souls ;—and therefore he would gladly ‘ endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they also might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.’

He has something more to say, however, in the verse before us, regarding feelings connected with his martyrdom : ‘ I joy,

*and I congratulate you all;*—for this seems to be the force of the expression rendered in our version, ‘*rejoice with you all.*’ ‘*For the same cause,*’ he continues, ‘*joy ye also, and congratulate me.*’ He would have his friends, as well as himself, to enter so fully into oneness of spirit with Christ—so perfectly to subordinate their earthly affections to their love for their Saviour, and interest in His cause—as to esteem the death of their spiritual father, in a way which would signally magnify Christ, as a source of joy. He ‘congratulates’ them, and would have them ‘rejoice,’ and by, in their turn, ‘congratulating him,’ stir him up to still higher joy. ‘Think, dear friends,’ he says, if we may expand the thought a little, ‘of the wide-spread conviction which may be produced in Rome of the truth of our religion, by the sight of such composure and elevation of spirit as I know God’s grace will enable me to exhibit in dying,—think of the chariot of fire and horses of fire which the eye of faith can see hovering over the scene of blood, to bear the martyr home,—think of the blessedness which awaits me yonder. Would your love desire to keep me back from usefulness and from happiness like this? Is it not reasonable that I should congratulate you, whose souls are so precious in Christ’s sight, that for your sakes, for your furtherance in wisdom and holiness, He exposes even His apostles to sufferings and death,—and that you should congratulate me on the privilege of being called to die in the service of Him who died for me?’ Ah, brethren, this was a very difficult task which the apostle imposed on the loving Philippians. They could well understand how, when ‘devout men carried Stephen to his burial,’ they ‘made great lamentation over him;’ but Paul’s teaching that, in such a case, the voice of ‘joy’ should mingle with the ‘lamentation’ of nature, and ring out more loudly and clearly than the voice of sorrow, must have seemed to them ‘an hard saying.’ The prospect of losing him who had been Christ’s messenger to them, to lead them into peace, and whose life seemed so needful for the confirmation and ex-

tension of Christianity among the Gentiles, could not but appear to them a very gloomy one. At the first,

‘They could hear no angels singing,  
See no brightness through the cloud.’

But gradually, we may believe, they attained at least to composure of spirit in view of this bereavement,—to childlike acquiescence in their Father’s will. Growth in faith made the ‘hard saying’ more intelligible. They came to understand that, through divine grace, it is a possible thing for a bereaved heart, even amid the deepest natural sorrow from the sense of personal loss, to look up to God with profoundest thankfulness. ‘All things are possible to him that believeth.’

## XVI.

## MISSION OF TIMOTHY.

' But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. 20 For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. 22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. 23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.'—PHIL. ii. 19-24.

AT this point, with the freedom of a familiar letter, the apostle passes on to a new subject,—his intention to send to them Timothy and Epaphroditus. I shall draw your attention at present to the first part of the passage, in which he speaks of sending Timothy. Paraphrased a little, this is his statement: 'But, passing from these matters, I hope, relying on the kindness of the Lord Jesus—who knows that in the interests of His kingdom I have formed the desire—to send Timothy to you shortly, for your solace and help, and that I also may be cheered by hearing from him, on his return to me, of your condition. I name him, because I have no man with me like-minded with him, who will with genuine interest care for your state. For all the persons whom I might otherwise have chosen, are seeking the furtherance of their own matters, not of Christ's. But ye know the proof of trustworthy character which he has given, in that, as a son serves his father, he has served with me for the advancement of the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send, immediately on my seeing how my own affairs are to stand, as regards the issue of my trial. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.'

You will observe that, in the 20th verse, where our version has ‘I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state,’ I have, in this paraphrase, for ‘naturally’ substituted ‘with genuine interest.’ Such is the exact force of the original word,—‘genuinely,’ as opposed to ‘spuriously,’ to everything like pretence and duplicity. By ‘naturally’ our translators, I think, meant ‘with the affection which besems the new nature, the spirit becoming those who are brethren in Christ.’

The apostle, in this passage, as you see, exhibits to us two sharply-contrasted types of Christian profession. We have, first, *unspiritual professors*: ‘*all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*’ In making this statement, the apostle has not before his mind the Christian church in Rome generally, nor even its more prominent members or ministers. Such a supposition is disproved by his mode of speaking regarding these brethren elsewhere in the Epistle, particularly by what he says in the 14th and 17th verses of the 1st chapter, ‘Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear,’ and this ‘of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.’ Looking at the connection in which the statement before us stands, its reference must be simply to those of the professing Christians within Paul’s reach at the time, of whom he might naturally have thought as suitable messengers to the church of Philippi,—that is to say, probably, the men, in all likelihood few in number, who had personal acquaintance with that church, and at the same time had aptness to teach and comfort and advise. Whether among those at this time in his thoughts were any whose names are known to us, from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, as having been more or less closely associated with him in travel and preaching, we have no means whatever of determining.

Of these the apostle declares that ‘*all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*’ Taken rigidly, in fulness of

meaning, these words describe *unregenerate* persons, enemies of God. Indeed, no language could with more exactness exhibit the grand contrast of character between men of the world and believers, than these, that the one class ‘seek their own (things or interests),’ the other ‘those of Jesus Christ.’ I think it, however, exceedingly unlikely, all things considered, that, in the case before us,—or even in the somewhat similar but yet stronger statement made in another Epistle regarding Demas, ‘Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world’ (2 Tim. iv. 10),—Paul meant his words to be taken as intimating a definite judgment that the character of the persons spoken of was *fundamentally* worldly, and thus that they had utterly apostatized in heart from Christ. ‘Whosoever is born of God,’ says the Apostle John, ‘cannot sin, because he is born of God,’—that is, from the very nature of the new life the will is turned toward holiness, so that fully conscious and deliberate violation of the law of God is impossible. But with this fact is quite compatible the same apostle’s other statement, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;’ the ground of the compatibility being expressly set forth by Paul, ‘If I do that *I would not*, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.’ As in a river, whilst the current is carrying the great body of the water on to the sea, yet a strong wind may arrest the progress of the water on the surface, or even to some extent reverse its direction; so, while the current of a true Christian’s character is toward conformity to the divine will, yet the strong blasts of temptation can influence it not a little. The deplorable strength of tendency to self-deception which remains even in a Christian heart, often leads it to tolerate or even love what, when shown to it in true colours by the Divine Spirit, it shrinks from with utter abhorrence. And the sinful state of feeling may continue for a long time. David was for many months hardened in gross sin, in the matter of Uriah; and even amid the brighter light, and more abundant spiritual influences, of Christianity the same

may be,—long seasons of torpor or backsliding, particularly through the subtle power of those insidious sins which somewhat resemble virtues, and take their name—such as faithless cowardice, calling itself wholesome discretion; or avarice, under the name of prudence. Our apostle, then, I apprehend, in the statement before us, simply mentions as a fact that, at the time he wrote, the professing Christians to whom he refers were so obviously under the power of worldliness in some form—probably enough the comparatively refined form of the desire of self-display as religious teachers in the metropolis of the world—as to make it unlikely that they would be willing to go to Philippi on a Christian mission, or that, if they undertook it, they would throw themselves into their work heartily and effectively. This is all he says. Whether this character was with them superficial and temporary, or pervasive and permanent, he was not called on to decide.

I suppose that, however often we have read this Epistle, yet most of us never come to this statement without a feeling of wonderment crossing our minds. That any professing Christians of the first age should be described as grievously unspiritual, and particularly persons so prominent in the church that the apostle could think of them as in some respects fitted to be his representatives to the church at Philippi,—this strikes us as something altogether unnatural. Our astonishment springs from a misconception regarding the character of the primitive church, which to some extent has hold of us all, through a vague impression that the exquisite outflow of Christian love at Jerusalem, of which the earlier chapters of Acts tell us, lasted all through the first ages, and had its counterpart in every congregation. A study of the Epistles is fitted to give us a different idea; convincing us that, almost from the very outset, Satanic subtlety, and human depravity and weakness, began to mar what divine grace had made so beautiful. The same evil influences wrought in the primitive church which work in the church still. Alas, brethren, it would not surprise

us greatly to hear Paul, if he were to revisit the earth in our time, say of a large number of the present race of church members, and of a considerable proportion, at least, of those who bear office, ‘They seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.’ In the wide-spread and manifold evidence, even, it may be, in the very management of the affairs of the church of Christ, of self-seeking, leading to jealousies and envies, paltrinesses and wickednesses,—in the seemingly exclusive, or all but exclusive, devotion of so many who have named the name of Christ to money-making or mere worldly pleasure,—in the frequent indisposition among church-goers to give liberally, or even at all, of their money, or their time, or their thoughts and labour, to Christian work, so that our foreign missions, and at home our Bible societies, Sabbath schools, town missions, and other religious agencies, are imperfectly supported, and fall far short of doing the good they might do,—we see, I fear, too plain reason to think it likely the apostle would speak so, to be much surprised. It would not surprise us greatly to find him, in a letter sent to warn a modern congregation of his intention to visit them, saying, ‘I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would ; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults ; and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed.’ Now, seeing that this language is actually employed by the apostle with reference to professing Christians in his own day,<sup>1</sup> you see that the moral and spiritual tone of the primitive church, taken generally, was, perhaps, not greatly different from that of the church as it exists among ourselves. Might it not reasonably excite surprise, think you,—ought we not to be most deeply abased,—that this is all we can say, with any show of truth? The inheritors of the religious teaching and holy examples of eighteen centuries of Chris-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21.

tianity—eighteen centuries of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit ; living in a land where Christianity is the religion universally professed, and where its influence has largely purified and elevated the general tone and habits of even worldly society ;—should we not be profoundly humbled that all which can be asserted of the professing church of Christ,—of any average congregation, for example, like our own,—is that probably it is not greatly worse, morally and spiritually, than the church of Rome or of Corinth, whose members had the sensual seductions of heathenism all around them, and had their religious steadiness and purity opposed by every influence of general society, and in many cases, no doubt, by the influence of nearest kinsfolk ? Ah, Christian brethren, when we think of our religious light and privileges, and, above all, when we consider the sublime self-sacrifice for us, through which we have been redeemed,—to us well belong shame and confusion of face, because of so many of us the apostle's words may be spoken—alas ! because of *all* of us, to some extent, it may be truly said, that ‘we seek our own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.’

How partial among us, through this prevalence of unspirituality, is the enjoyment of Christian peace ! How lamentably rare is that influence of consistent holy example, which should be the church's most powerful evangelistic instrument ! To how deplorable an extent are Christians withheld from active exertion in the service of Him whom they call Lord, or enfeebled in such work if they undertake it ! To this last point, you observe, the apostle specially adverts, stating that, through want of spirituality, the persons of whom he is speaking could not, ‘with genuine or natural interest,’ care for the Philippians. True and warm piety is the cardinal qualification for religious work. It is a great power, even standing alone ; and where this is wanting, the very finest combination of other qualifications is, after all, but a beautiful body without a soul. Personal religion, true healthy spiritual life, is the only prin-

ciple of true healthy religious activity. A non-religious worker in any department of religious labour,—a person taking part in any of the agencies of that church which the Lord purchased with His own blood, who himself has no saving knowledge of this Lord,—this is a monstrosity, a thing awfully unnatural in God's universe. And yet, alas, my brethren, in this world, which man's sin has in many things made an unnatural world, it is to be feared that there are not a few such monstrous things; and that, in that day when the secrets of all hearts come to be revealed, many who have long, and to the eye of men respectably, held office in the Christian church, and in various ways taken part in Christian work, will be found castaways.

With these unspiritual professing Christians the apostle in the passage before us contrasts the character of *Timothy*. This eminent evangelist was a native of Lycaonia, in the centre of Asia Minor. Faithfully and lovingly taught by his mother, a pious Jewess, to long and look for the Messiah promised to the fathers, he was led, on Paul's first visit to those regions, to recognise in Jesus of Nazareth the great Deliverer, and to give Him his heart. On the apostle's second visit, four or five years afterwards, finding Timothy highly commended by the Christians of the district, he took him as his companion, to give such aid in missionary work as a very young man could, and to be trained for full efficiency as a preacher of the cross. From that time onward we find him in constant connection with the apostle, either as his companion, or as carrying on some separate ministerial work which Paul had entrusted to him. Of his character, as seen so closely and under very testing circumstances during many years, the apostle gives his judgment in the passage before us; and calls on the Philippians to attest the accuracy of that judgment from their own knowledge, for Timothy had been among Paul's companions on his first visit to Philippi, and had perhaps been there several times afterwards: ‘*Ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the*

*father, he hath served with me in the gospel!*<sup>1</sup> This mutual affection and esteem continued unbroken. The very last words of the great apostle which have come down to us, are those written to Timothy from his prison at Rome, when martyrdom was very near,—in which he calls him his ‘dearly beloved son,’ and entreats him to ‘do his diligence to come unto him shortly.’

The praise given to Timothy in the present passage is very high. His work and his dangers had been similar to those of Paul himself; and his persistent stedfastness from the beginning, in encountering them, proves faith to have very quickly become mature in the young disciple. Another young man, you remember, who had previously been associated with Paul in the same way, John Mark, cousin<sup>1</sup> of Barnabas, and probably the Mark who wrote the second Gospel, left the apostle and Barnabas in Pamphylia, and ‘went not with them to the work’ (Acts xv. 38). He, like Timothy, was a man of true piety; yet the energy of his young faith yielded for a time under the pressure of the fear of toil and peril. But Timothy was enabled to stand firm. The relations, too, which, in the carrying on of his Christian work, he bore to the apostle, whilst in the most important respects they were fitted to be a great support and stimulus to him, yet in others added, or at least by many a man would have been felt to add, to the difficulty of his position. Where two or more men are called to labour together in arduous and delicate work, all of them having a deep sense of personal responsibility, difficulties of necessity constantly arise, which an isolated worker does not encounter. And in a kind of work, such as any of the forms of ‘labour in the gospel,’ in which success depends largely on the existence of

<sup>1</sup> The original word in Col. iv. 10, rendered in our version ‘sister’s son,’ really means, beyond doubt, ‘cousin.’ Some scholars think there is reason to believe that, in the older English, the expression ‘sister’s son’ was occasionally used in the sense of ‘cousin,’ like the similar word ‘Geschwisterkind’ in German.

affection and confidence between the labourers and those whom they desire to influence for Christ, it is obvious that singular watchfulness, self-restraint, largeness of spirit, delicacy of feeling, are needed in men working conjointly. Hence the proverbial rarity of thoroughly comfortable colleagueships in the ministry. In the case of Paul and Timothy, however, the difficulties were, so far as appears, completely overcome ; and this was due to admirable qualities in both. The grand simplicity and unselfishness, the mellow Christian wisdom, the exquisite patience and gentleness, of the apostle, fitted most pleasantly in with a charming meekness, and humility, and unselfishness, and affectionateness, in his young friend ; so that the relation they bore to each other was one greatly and, no doubt, growingly helpful to both. The apostle saw with delight the maturing grace of his beloved companion ; and Timothy's heart was ever full of thankfulness to God for giving him such a friend. How full and satisfying the testimony of the apostle is,—how gladdening, as the evidence that amid all his sufferings and sorrows—some of the bitterest of them, as we have already seen, from unspiritual and disappointing associates—this affection between him and Timothy remained so firm, and was so sweet to him! '*As a son with the father,*' he says,—or yet more beautifully, according to the exact meaning of the original, '*as a son serves his father,*'—'*so he with me has served unto the furtherance of the gospel,*'—the first clause bringing out, by the comparison, the relation between Paul and Timothy ; the second, instead of precisely finishing the comparison, passing off, with much elegance and delicacy, to exhibit their common relation to God, as an elder and a younger participant in that glorious service which is perfect freedom. With all becoming filial love, and trust, and veneration for his spiritual father the apostle, —thus Timothy, journeying on through life by Paul's side, together with him served God.

The character of Timothy is certainly a very beautiful one, —one which all the right-minded among us cannot but most

earnestly desire to see mirrored in ourselves, and all who are dear to us. Now we are told expressly regarding him, more fully, I think, than with reference to any other New Testament saint, what was the mode of early training through which, by the blessing of God, he became the man we find him. To this, for a little, I will turn your thoughts, as the most fitting and profitable practical close to our meditations on the present paragraph. In Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy, he mentions that 'the unfeigned faith which was in him, had dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice,' and that 'from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures.' It is plain, then, you see, that, for the production of this character on which we have been looking with such admiration, God had blessed *parental teaching and influence*, and particularly *parental training in the Bible*. The duty of prayerful, thoughtful, hopeful religious education of children is therefore, I think, that which a study of the life and character of Timothy is most fitted to commend to the consideration of Christian parents.

Of all societies known among men, a family is that which has the strongest, tenderest, and most sacred bonds. Its ties are those by which God, herein displaying the unsearchable riches of His love in Christ, binds believers to Himself; for He is our Father, and all we are brethren. In no other relation among men does nature excite so warm an affection for those with whom we are associated, and so deep an interest in their welfare; in none, therefore, does grace originate so ardent a desire that their souls may 'prosper and be in health.' If, then, men and women who are not specially bound together by any earthly ties, feel themselves impelled by their common needs, their common longings, their common mercies, to constitute such a church as meets in the house of public worship; surely natural affection, purified and ennobled by the influences of grace, should constitute every professing Christian family—the very infants of which, remember, are by baptism members of the great visible

community of saints—a ‘church in the house,’ for instruction and discipline and common worship.

The position that in a household there should be religious teaching, seems to me one so self-evident, as not at all to call for proof. Truth, understood and believed, being the instrument of conversion,—and growth in clearness and breadth of view, and in liveliness of faith, being the means of growth in likeness to God,—advancement in religious knowledge is one of the principal objects in our association as a church, and our exercises in the sanctuary; and the case is precisely similar with the ‘church in the house.’ There must be teaching, and this obviously by the parents. To take children regularly to church, and to give them opportunities of religious instruction at day schools, Sabbath schools, and Bible classes, is well; but parents who think on the matter, must feel convinced that, while these are most valuable auxiliaries, yet not one of them, nor all of them combined, can be a satisfactory *substitute* for their teaching. To them God in His providence has said, ‘Take this child and nurse it for Me, and I will give you your wages;’ and specially from them at the last will be demanded an account of this stewardship. They cannot strip themselves of this responsibility. No wise parent, therefore, will think that *all* the teaching of his children can or should be handed over to others,—the more especially as he knows that the bond which nature has knit between parents and children, and all the holy and beautiful affections which hover round it, give to parental instruction a force that cannot be possessed by any other.

If parents are to discharge this duty of teaching, they must themselves, according to their opportunities, be students of the truth to be taught. A religious teacher, whether in a wide or narrow sphere, will certainly fail to build up those whom he professes to instruct, in that Christian wisdom from which holiness and comfort spring, unless he be himself a faithful student. Only conscientious learners can be successful teachers. We never know how much we need to know,—

how little we know clearly and exactly,—how much that we thought we knew well, was laid hold of by the mind but loosely and vaguely,—till we are called upon to teach others. One good reason, I am afraid, my brethren, why teaching by parents is far from being so common as it should be, is that many professing Christian parents, when they attempt it, find themselves culpably ignorant of divine truth—more ignorant than their pride of heart permits them to acknowledge even to themselves ; and one grand advantage which would accrue from a general, persistent, and faithful discharge of the duty of parental instruction, would be the manifest advance of the elder people themselves in the knowledge of the Word of life.

That teaching may be successful, it must be painstaking and thorough ; not contenting itself with a mere parrot repetition of words, but resting not till every step taken be understood, so far as the various ages and capacities of the members of the family admit. It must be kindly and earnest, too ; not seeming to be a burden or a *mere* duty to the teacher, or so conducted as to be a burden and a weariness to the taught, but welcomed by both as a privilege. The real desire of the parents must be, and must be felt to be, to win to Christ the souls which nature has made the most dear to them. Ah, brethren, can worse be said of unspirituality, than that it brings men into the position of ‘not naturally caring for’ the souls even of their own children ? Above all, such teaching, to be successful, must be conducted in the spirit of prayer,—under a deep sense of the insufficiency of all human instrumentalities, left to themselves, and with earnest wrestlings for the gracious influences of the Spirit. Where special prayer, however brief, *with* the family, for a blessing on the instruction, forms a part of the service, the force of the teaching will be intensified many-fold.

Besides such teaching of the household collectively, a wise parent will, at suitable seasons, take the members of the family

apart, and deal with them individually, plainly, earnestly, and affectionately, regarding their spiritual position and prospects. Such private appeals may be ‘as nails fastened in a sure place,’ whereby all the truth taught is secured by God to the soul for evermore as a saving power.

In the teaching of their children, a Christian father and mother will lovingly and judiciously co-operate. But let me specially remind believing mothers—the Eunices of my audience—that, while their children are at the most susceptible age, the mother’s influence and opportunities are commonly both particularly great. Innumerable Christians, many of them eminent in the service of their Master, have traced their conversion to the teaching and prayers of a mother. To mention but one recent instance,—the biographer of the illustrious General Havelock says: ‘His religious impressions were traceable to the influence and the efforts of his mother, when he was a little boy. It was her custom to assemble her children for reading the Scriptures and prayer in her own room. Henry was always of the party whenever he was at home from school; and in course of time he was expected to take the reading, which he generally did. It impressed him; and, under these pleasant circumstances, he knew, like Timothy, the Holy Scriptures from a child.’ May God multiply such mothers!

## XVII.

## MISSION OF EPAPHRODITUS.

' Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death : but God had mercy on him ; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness ; and hold such in reputation ; 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.'—PHIL. ii. 25-30.

**I**N this paragraph the apostle goes on to say that, whilst, as he has mentioned, he purposes soon to send Timothy to Philippi, and hopes to visit the church himself also before very long, yet he has thought it needful to send Epaphroditus to them at once. This intimation is followed by a statement of his reasons for doing so ; and the section closes with an appeal to the Philippians to regard Epaphroditus, and all similarly devoted servants of Christ, with high esteem and warm affection.

In reading the section carefully, with its detailed exhibition of the character and feelings of Epaphroditus, and particularly the closing appeal, it is difficult to resist the impression that on some ground, which he does not state, Paul felt a little doubt whether the Philippians, in welcoming Epaphroditus, for whom they evidently cherished a warm and tender affection, might not have at the same time in their hearts, for some reason, a certain feeling of disappointment. It may be that

they had asked the apostle, should he be still prevented from personally visiting them, to send them one of his most trusted helpers for a time ; and when Epaphroditus, one of the members of their own congregation, was sent back as in some sort Paul's deputy, a measure of disappointment might be felt, through the proverbial blindness, in a prophet's own country, to his claims and excellences. Supposing an anticipation of this to have been in Paul's mind while writing, the structure of the whole passage is explained. By the mention previously of his own hope to visit them, and of his intention to send Timothy, the most honoured and loved of all his companions, as soon as possible, the way is most skilfully prepared for the intimation regarding Epaphroditus ; and now, in speaking of Epaphroditus, the apostle makes it evident that, having during his stay in Rome proved himself a most efficient and in every way admirable assistant, and been admitted to his closest friendship, he could with fulness of knowledge and of sympathy exhibit the apostle's views and wishes to the Philippian brethren.

The only thing in the language of the passage which seems to claim a word of explanation, is the use of the *past* in one or two places with reference to the sending of Epaphroditus, whilst, as is clear from the whole passage, he was in fact the bearer of the Epistle. ‘*I supposed* it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus,—for he *longed* after you all, and *was* full of heaviness ;’ and ‘*I sent* him therefore the more carefully.’ This is the idiom of the original language,—a letter-writer transporting himself in imagination to the time when his letter would be read, and when the course of feelings and doings which were *present* at the time of writing would have become *past*. We, on the other hand, generally keep our modes of expression in accordance with the actual time of writing, so that we should naturally say here, ‘*I think* it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus,—for he *has* been longing after you all, and *is* full of heaviness,’ and ‘*I send* him therefore the more carefully.’

Of Epaphroditus we know nothing except what is mentioned here, and—regarding one point a little more fully—in the 18th verse of the 4th chapter of this Epistle. An Epaphras is spoken of in the Epistle to the Colossians, and in that to Philemon; who by some has been supposed to be the same person here referred to. This, however, is unlikely. The one name, indeed, may be only a short form of the other, and the character ascribed to Epaphras is very similar to that given to Epaphroditus; but both names, or forms of the name, were very common; and Epaphras is expressly said to have been a member of the Colossian church,<sup>1</sup> whilst everything told us of Epaphroditus leads us to think that his ordinary place of residence was Philippi,—from which he had come to Rome, bringing to Paul such pecuniary aid as the church there could give.

The apostle here, in sending him back, speaks of him as his ‘*brother*:’ How sweet a term for ‘fellow-Christian’ this is, dear friends,—how suggestive of lofty dignity, precious privilege, holy character! It brings before our minds at once the family of God, and all the sweet and elevating affections to which the ‘new birth’ gives rise. ‘Of His own will the Father of lights begat us with the word of truth;’ and believers, being thus all children of the same God, necessarily, in the measure of the clearness and liveliness of their faith, feel themselves to be brethren of each other.

But the apostle has more to say of Epaphroditus than that he is a member of this glorious family. He exhibits conspicuously the features of character which should distinguish its members. The life of the household of God should be, according to the will of their Father, full of holy and beneficent *activity*. Said the divine Elder Brother, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;’ and to every member of the family the Father’s command is, ‘Son, go work to-day in My vineyard.’ Epaphroditus had heard the call, and, as opportunity was

<sup>1</sup> Col. iv. 12.

given to him, he laboured in his Father's service. In Rome he evidently engaged heartily and efficiently in Christian work under the apostle's direction, and is therefore described as his '*companion in labour*'

Still further, however. In a world which loves darkness rather than light, effort to diffuse light will of necessity bring hatred and opposition; so that the labourers have also to be *soldiers*. As, under good Nehemiah, when repairing the walls of Jerusalem, 'the builders had every one his sword girded by his side, and so builded,' so must it be also with those who are rearing up the wall of the spiritual city of God. The modes of opposition are different under different circumstances, but the spirit of keen hostility is never wanting. Now, as in Nehemiah's days, 'when the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, hear that the walls of Jerusalem are made up, and that the breaches begin to be stopped, then are they very wroth, and conspire all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.' Epaphroditus, preaching the gospel in Rome, had to encounter contempt and peril, both among Jews and heathen. But, as we may fairly conclude from the hearty and approving way in which the apostle calls him his '*fellow-soldier*', he was 'not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of Paul His prisoner, but was partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God.' He proved his readiness to 'endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,' believing it to be a faithful saying, 'If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.'

Looking back now over the three terms employed by the apostle, '*brother*', '*companion in labour*', and '*fellow-soldier*', you see that they are arranged in an ascending scale, from a simple statement of companionship in religion up to a statement of companionship in endurance of severe tests of sincerity and devotedness in religion. 'I send to you Epaphroditus, one whom I have found to be a Christian energetic and brave,

—one to whom I am bound by the closest ties, through community of aspirations and sympathies, community of Christian labour, community of danger and suffering in the cause of our common Lord.'

The Philippians also had special relations to Epaphroditus, and special cause to esteem him. These the apostle exhibits over against his own. 'On the one hand, he is mine in brotherhood, and companionship in labour and suffering,—but, on the other hand, yours as agent in beneficence,'—'your messenger and (your) minister to my wants.' Here, certainly, was a relation fitted to bind the Philippians and Epaphroditus together, and both to Paul, in the closest bonds. In the spirit so honoured by Christ—so Christlike—of caring for a righteous man 'in the name of a righteous man,' the Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to bear to the apostle in his imprisonment their pecuniary contributions for his support, and to discharge to him all such services as might be within his power. Most faithfully and lovingly—his whole heart in the work—had he executed his commission. Paul's estimate of the sacredness and dignity of the work, and of the singleness and consecration of heart with which it had been done, are indicated, as it seems to me, by the terms he employs. The word rendered '*he that ministered*' is commonly employed of priestly service, or of the service of angels, and thus naturally carries with it the same suggestion of sacred and honourable office as our own word 'minister.' Again,—the term here translated, according to its original sense, '*messenger*', is that usually rendered '*apostle*', and from which indeed the English word '*apostle*' comes; and therefore, I think—even when used as here, rather loosely—it must always have conveyed to the minds of the early Christians some such idea of venerableness as is in our minds when, for example, we speak of John Williams as the '*apostle*' of the South Seas. Epaphroditus, Paul's '*brother and companion in labour and fellow-soldier*', was '*the apostle and minister of the Philippians for the supply*

of Paul's need ;' and thus, from his relations to both, he was certainly a most fit and natural deputy from Paul to his brethren at Philippi.

Epaphroditus had been very ill in Rome. '*He was sick, nigh unto death.*' To the young believer it often and most naturally presents itself as a strange thing that affliction is not altogether withdrawn from Christ's people. Is not affliction an element of death,—and have not Christians 'passed from death unto life'? The mature believer also sees mystery very near ; but he knows, at least, that the subjection of the saints to trouble is not an isolated anomaly connected with God's mode of saving them, but fits in with the entire plan. The grandest element of Christ's salvation is the emancipation of the moral nature, which is our glory, from the debasing thraldom of sin. Now here, as in all His actings on our souls, we have no violent convulsion—no sudden substitution of a complete or perfectly holy nature for our former sinful selves, such as we can scarcely conceive compatible with the maintenance of a sense of personal identity. We have a gradual process,—a growth. The heart, the will, 'out of which are the issues of life,' receives the heavenly seed of holy desire, to develope according to its kind, under the influence of the refreshing rain of heaven, and the genial beams of the Sun of righteousness. A most important form of the tillage is affliction. 'Every branch that beareth fruit,' the Great Husbandman 'purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit.' Surely, then, 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law !'

By affliction our Father *leads us into deeper seriousness.* Even a Christian is apt, amid the frivolities of earth, to find the great realities which faith has revealed to him growing dim to his view. His heart and conscience, made so tender by the good Spirit aforetime, are prone to be in no small measure hardened again by the passage of secular thoughts and affections. The power over him of God's word and ordinances is

apt to grow feebler. Now affliction is the great cloud-dispeller for the spiritual nature. Before its breath the mists which hid God and eternity from us disappear, so that the vanities assume their true littleness, and the realities stand out once more in their impressive grandeur. From the distracting noises of the world, which drown the ‘still small voice,’ God, through affliction, lovingly leads His children out into the wilderness, that there He may commune with them alone, and ‘speak comfortably to them, giving them their vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope.’

Affliction *gives much help, too, in serious self-study.* The heart is ‘deceitful above all things,’ and even the Christian knows very little of himself. Affliction lets down a blazing torch for him into the depths of his nature; and he sees many things which he little expected to see. He finds his faith weak where he thought it strong, his views dim where he thought them clear, his pride stubborn where he thought it broken. Thus afflictions of every kind are *trials*—testing and revealing agencies,—that the believer may know himself, and be led to cry to his Father for wisdom and strength.

Such a case as that of Epaphroditus—where, from an important field of Christian labour, a workman, very efficient and seemingly much needed, is laid aside by long and severe sickness, or, it may be, removed permanently by death—has obviously special difficulties of its own, with relation to Christ’s administration of His kingdom of grace. This good man has been brought across the sea, and through manifold dangers, to succour the aged apostle, and cheer him by undertaking in his room some portion of the work which, through God’s providence, he is prevented from doing personally. He has begun this work most successfully, and the weary heart of the noble old soldier of Jesus Christ is finding great comfort in this loving and energetic friend,—when the Lord’s own hand suddenly prostrates him utterly, and the shadow of death

falls upon him. How often we ourselves have felt the difficulty, my brethren,—when a wise Christian father was taken away from his children at the very time they were about fully to face the temptations of life, and seemed most to need his watchful, prayerful, guiding love,—or a young minister at home, or missionary abroad, who appeared to us to have been by grace polished with singular completeness as a shaft to pierce the heart of the King's enemies, is removed at the very outset of his work ! All such cases have peculiarly impressive teaching for those who have ears to hear. I doubt not that Epaphroditus, as he lay on his bed of pain and weariness, was taught by his sickness, as Milton by the blindness which severed him from his old modes of work, that

‘God doth not need  
Either man's work or His own gifts,’—

that even those instruments which He has made and fitted most perfectly for His work may at any moment be broken, whilst yet ‘the Word of God liveth and abideth for ever,’—that He Himself is the All-efficient, and most rightfully claims all the glory.

Severe as the illness of Epaphroditus was, it was not unto death. ‘*God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*’ The earnest cry of the apostle to the great Giver and Sustainer of life was heard ; so that upon the trouble which he already had, as a prisoner, compassed inevitably with various sources of distress, there was not laid the additional and very heavy sorrow which the death of this beloved and most helpful friend would have caused. In mercy to Epaphroditus himself, too, the recovery came. I can imagine a little wonderment occurring for a moment to some readers, at this part of the apostle's statement. Is not this he who told us but a short time ago, that, for the believer, ‘to depart is to be with Christ, which is far better’? Can he then, with justice, call it a manifestation of

mercy to this eminent servant of Christ, that, after having endured very much of the bitterness of death—after having passed far through the dreariness of the valley of the shadow—he should yet be withheld from entering on that ‘far better’ lot, and should be brought back to the perplexities, and sins, and sorrows of this earthly life?

In answer, it may be said that the Christian in full spiritual health, knowing that God makes ‘*all* things work together for good to them that love Him,’ will hold all providential dealings, whatever be their aspect to the eye of sense, as mercies; and therefore ‘praise will continually be in his mouth.’ At midnight, in the inner prison, their backs bleeding from unjust stripes, Paul and Silas ‘sang praises to God.’ If from illness a Christian recovers, he will praise God for the mercy of restoration; if he dies, he passes out into the sphere of the full, glorious, unclouded manifestation of divine mercy.

But though this is true and important, yet, as an answer, it is plainly inadequate; for when Paul uses the expression ‘God had mercy on Epaphroditus,’ as simply equivalent to an intimation of the fact that ‘Epaphroditus recovered from his illness,’ he obviously leads us to suppose, not merely that Epaphroditus was ready to acquiesce in either issue, and count it a mercy, but that this particular issue was desired and prayed for by him as a mercy. It was natural and right that it should be so. And the little difficulty is solved by a moment’s consideration. Christianity proves itself to have the same Author as man, by according in everything with our original nature—the nature which God gave us,—opposing itself only to the perversities, the secondary superinduced nature, due to sin. Now our instincts lead us to love life; and the convictions and affections which belong to the purest and loftiest spirituality give strength to this instinctive longing. The love to God and man which the cordial acceptance of the gospel awakens, prompts to ardent desires and earnest efforts for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Thus, looking at the powers

and opportunities we have here to exercise influence for Christ, the Christian feels, as none other can, the inestimable preciousness and nobleness of life. It argues therefore not elevated spirituality, but spiritual morbidness, spiritual ignorance and cowardice, if, so long as God continues power to serve Him, longings and prayers for speedy death be allowed to occupy the heart,—desire of the personal happiness and rest which heaven will give gaining more influence than the desire of usefulness, the desire of ‘serving our generation by the will of God.’ A ‘good soldier of Jesus Christ’ will not be wishful to quit his post, so long as the Captain of salvation continues with him the means of maintaining it. It was natural, then, and right, for Epaphroditus, stricken down by illness in the midst of important labours, and while full of strength and hope, to wish and pray for prolonged life.

As the years flit on, and loved ones pass away before us to heaven, and the infirmities of age show themselves, ‘the keepers of the house trembling, and the strong men bowing themselves,’—or, in earlier life, when months and years of feebleness, and weariness, and pain, bring home the sad conviction of permanent incapacity alike for the work and the pleasures of earth,—it becomes natural then, and reasonable, to have the patriarch’s ‘I would not live alway’ much before the heart. In cases like these, the Divine Captain is, in His providence, intimating His purpose to withdraw the soldier from his post; and, by turning the longings alike of nature and of grace toward the peace and the energy of the other life, He meetens the soul for the change. ‘I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better,’ says the war-worn veteran of the faith, now ‘such an one as Paul the aged;’—but mark, he is ‘in a strait betwixt two’ in his feelings on this matter even yet, and, so long as any duty remains for him to do, he would rather stay to do it. Still, at the shouting of the Lord’s adversaries, the old soldier’s eye flashes, and with renewed ardour he girds on his sword again, and takes his place, to defend the cause and the friends

of Him he loves ; and again his battle-cry rings out loud and clear. ‘To abide in the flesh is more needful for you : and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.’

When the prayer of Epaphroditus was heard, and he came back from the gates of the unseen world, we cannot doubt that it was to enter on a life of even more devotedness than he had before shown. An enemy of God may sometimes take up again the weapons of his unholy warfare, even after being by the divine mercy restored from severe illness ; for if, as our Lord tells us, even the sight of a man returned from the dead would not work faith in those who refuse to hear Moses and the prophets, no doubt such an approach to resurrection in one’s own experience as was granted to Epaphroditus may fail. But it may safely be declared impossible that an earnest, active Christian like Epaphroditus could be dealt with as he was, and not be a more profoundly spiritually-minded man, and more resolute to ‘work while it is called to-day,’ than he had ever been. He blessed Him ‘with whom are the issues from death,’ and dedicated his renewed life to His glory.

Observe the glimpse which we have here of the spiritual training through which God brought His illustrious servant Paul,—a glimpse fitted to bring the apostle nearer to us, and give his example and his teaching greater power over us. The points in which the apostles differed from ordinary believers—the inspiration and miraculous power which they received to qualify them for their peculiar work—sometimes, I think, hide from us a little the fact that, as men by nature sinful, but guided onward and upward by divine grace, their spiritual experience was, in all important respects, similar to that of other believers. You see here, that though, as regards signs and wonders as well as energy and success, Paul was ‘not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles,’—though at Ephesus, as we read, ‘special miracles were wrought by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or

aprons, and the diseases departed from them,'—yet the discipline of spending days or weeks by the sick-bed of a dear friend, of anxiously watching the varying pulse, of wrestling with God for mercy, of seeing with trembling alternations of hope and fear the slow return of life,—this precious discipline could not be withheld from Paul. When the idolaters of Ephesus were to be convinced that the kingdom of God was come nigh to them, then a handkerchief from Paul's body could at once bring health to the diseased; but when Paul himself, and his helpers, were, through the teaching of affliction, to have their spiritual life beautified and strengthened, then Epaphroditus had to languish in sore illness, and from the bank of the dark river come back by slow stages,—and Tropimus had to be 'left at Miletum sick.'

One of the apostle's reasons for sending Epaphroditus to Philippi was the intense desire of Epaphroditus himself to revisit his home and friends: '*For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness because that ye had heard that he had been sick.*' There are probably not a few among us, who from our own experience can illustrate this statement,—recalling how, after a severe illness away from home, amid the nervous weakness of convalescence an intense longing took possession of the heart to see again the kind faces which had smiled on us in childhood, and hear the old familiar tones of love. The particular form which the feeling took in the case before us was such as to show a very gentle and amiable character. Epaphroditus knew that many among the Philippian Christians cherished a lively affection for him; and, being aware that they had heard of his illness, he knew that there would be among them much grief and anxiety. Under these circumstances, it seemed to him as if he could not have comfort of spirit again in returning to his evangelistic work, until he and his friends had once more looked each other in the face. There was here a certain womanly tenderness, which some men would have called weakness. Paul does not call it such, and evidently

does not think it such. He knew the manly robustness of spirit, the decision and energy and devotedness, which had made Epaphroditus his honoured ‘companion in labour and fellow-soldier;’ and to him, I doubt not, the element of softness and sweetness, brought out in the languor of the recovery, exhibited a new charm.

Not merely did Epaphroditus long to return to Philippi, but the apostle himself thought it every way desirable. How beautifully the tenderness of *his* character also is illustrated in this little paragraph! ‘God had mercy on him,’ he says, ‘and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. *I send him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.*’ ‘I feel it such a blessing to myself to have Epaphroditus back again from the edge of the grave, that I cannot but wish you, his Philippian friends and mine, to be sharers in my satisfaction, through resuming personal intercourse with him. You will be made glad, I know; and though I shall greatly miss his kind and affectionate attentions to me, and his pleasant Christian converse, yet it will gratify me much to feel that his return has gratified you. The dreariness of my imprisonment will remain, yet it will seem less gloomy to me,—I shall be the less sorrowful,—through my knowledge that you are happy in his society.’ How exquisite is this Christian courtesy!

In the 29th and 30th verses the apostle exhibits the duty of the Philippians towards Epaphroditus. ‘*Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation; because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death,—not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.*’ To our ears these last words have somewhat of a reproachful sound; but it is evident from the whole tone of the context, both here and in a passage in one of the Epistles to the Corinthians, where similar words occur,<sup>1</sup> that the apostle has no thought of reproach in using them. He simply means to show

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 17.

how much he owes to Epaphroditus, and to commend him to the love of the Philippians, by mentioning his having with affectionate solicitude rendered to the aged prisoner those personal services which the other Philippians would, no doubt, according to the testimony of their whole conduct, gladly have rendered, but were by absence prevented.

In these verses, you see, the apostle states a fact regarding his friend's illness, which had naturally drawn out his sympathy with peculiar intensity. The illness was directly traceable to his devotion to the Master's service. The particular way in which it was brought on is not mentioned. The cause might be exposure or over-exertion on the journey by land and sea to aid the apostle, or in his attendance on him, or in preaching the gospel in Rome; but, be this as it may, certainly in some way it was '*for the work of Christ*' that 'he was nigh unto death.' It is not by any means impossible that something of imprudence, in the way of undue exposure or labour, had aided in bringing on the illness. It very frequently is so in such cases; and it is exceedingly probable, I think, that if Paul recognised anything of this kind, the same wise and watchful affection which led him to enjoin on his zealous young friend Timothy some consideration of his delicate constitution and '*often infirmities*,' might prompt also a quiet word of caution to Epaphroditus. But the soul of the faithful old servant of Christ was refreshed by the sight of the imprudence of holy devotedness. His heart had been distressed by seeing some, of whom he had hoped well, '*seeking their own things, not those which are Jesus Christ's*;' and the fervour of zeal, and grand self-forgetfulness, of Epaphroditus came to him like a draught of cold water in a thirsty land.

The fact that '*for the work of Christ*' Epaphroditus had incurred his affliction, evidently gave him a very strong claim on the love and veneration of all the followers of Christ. It behoved the Philippian church, therefore, to '*receive him in the Lord with all gladness*'—not merely to give him the welcome

of a friend, but to rejoice over him with fervent brotherly affection, as one in whom the transforming power of the grace of Christ had been signally shown,—and to ‘hold’ very specially ‘*in reputation*’ him and all who, like him, glorified the Redeemer by self-sacrificing zeal in His cause. Knowing the warm-hearted Philippians as he did, Paul could have no doubt that the reception of his messenger would be indeed ‘with all gladness.’ You remember the enthusiastic welcome which was accorded among us a year or two ago to the brave young American who had encountered innumerable perils to carry aid to the illustrious missionary pioneer of Central Africa, David Livingstone. We felt as if in helping the noble old man, whom all of us had come to think of as a personal friend, he had helped ourselves. We know what pleasure and sense of honour would be felt if Florence Nightingale presented herself under our roof, or under the roof of any true-hearted countryman of those wounded soldiers of the Crimea, for whom she cared so wisely and lovingly, and who kissed her very shadow on the wall, as she passed through the wards of the hospital. Somewhat like this would be the position of Epaphroditus on his return to Philippi. The knowledge of his heroism and self-devotion in the cause of the Saviour they loved, and this in discharging the duties of a ministry for the relief and comfort of their dear friend and spiritual father the apostle, could not but lead them to feel it a peculiar privilege and honour to be permitted to welcome him once more among them.

No one, I think, my friends, can attentively read the paragraph we have now examined, and that immediately preceding, without feeling that they supply fine illustrations of the exquisite beauty of the Apostle Paul’s character. How gloriously free, unreserved, and unselfish his commendations of Timothy and Epaphroditus, and how tender and loving the heart from which they came! And even with these friends, so dear and so needful to him, the aged servant of Christ, worn with

labour and suffering, is willing, ‘for the work of Christ,’ to part,—and to be left alone! This is he who aforetime ‘was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious’—who ‘entered into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison,’ because they did not think in religion as he did. Let us praise the power of divine grace, brethren;—and let us ‘be followers together of him,’ in the sweetness of spirit, and self-sacrificing zeal for all that is true and beautiful and good, to which ‘the love of Christ constrained him!’

## XVIII.

## JOY IN THE LORD.

'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.'—PHIL. iii. 1.

E VANGELICAL religion, my brethren, is often charged with making men gloomy and morose,—averse to sharing in the innocent pleasures of life, and prone to frown on the enjoyments of others, simply because they are enjoyments. Beyond doubt, this accusation is very widely entertained by the carnal heart, as a plausible ground for resistance to the claims of the gospel. To the young especially, who feel themselves impelled by the warmth and buoyancy of their nature to every form of delight, Christianity thus misconceived cannot but be in the highest degree repulsive. This charge against religion finds some seeming support in the demeanour of a considerable number of Christians, in whom, from defective views of duty, the gospel is not permitted freely to exert its sweetening and beautifying power on a naturally ungenial temper. But such persons grievously misrepresent the spirit of the religion they profess. Many of us, I trust, know from our own experience that the truth as it is in Jesus, cordially and intelligently received, is a perennial spring of joy for the believer himself, and of sympathy with all true and innocent happiness in others. Jesus, in His humiliation, was a 'Man of sorrows,' because He bore the weight of the world's guilt, and 'it pleased the Lord to put Him to grief;' but when the bitter work of expiation was finished, then He was 'anointed with the oil of gladness.' Christians, His brethren, are 'quickened together with Him.' They are sharers in this new life of

triumphant gladness. Their burden is removed, and they have entered into ‘glorious liberty.’ They know, indeed, the seriousness of life, and thus their happiness is tinged with gravity; but for that very reason it is deep, and broad, and lasting. In a world like this, where death is the one great certainty, any joy which is not tempered with seriousness can be only like the crackling of a fire of thorns, where speedily again all is cold and dark.

The verse before us is one of many passages of Scripture which proclaim happiness to be the regular and becoming tone of the believing heart. Nothing in the language employed by the apostle needs lengthened explanation. The introductory word ‘Finally’ leads us to expect the close of the Epistle to be near. As a matter of fact, we have nearly the half yet before us. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that some circumstance led Paul to write more than he had intended. At this point we shall have occasion to look a little more closely when we come to the consideration of the next verse, which introduces a new subject.

Our idiomatic use of the phrase ‘*rejoice in*’ leads us naturally to take the apostle’s precept here, ‘*Rejoice in the Lord*,’ as meaning, ‘Rejoice in the contemplation and experience of His excellences.’ In reality, the sense is somewhat more general than this. ‘*In the Lord*’ exhibits the thought of vital union to the Saviour,—dearest of all thoughts to the Christian, and which by this phrase Paul, as you know, delights to set forth in regard to every department of the believer’s inner and outer life. He had urged the Philippians, two verses before, to receive Epaphroditus ‘in the Lord,’—‘with the spirit which union to the Saviour produces and sustains.’ So here ‘*Rejoice as Christians*.’ ‘Being in the Lord, be full of gladness, for a Christian ought to be happy; but see to it always that your sources of joy are in the Lord,—such as become saints.’

In the course of the Epistle, the apostle has again and again expressed his desire that his readers might have spiritual

joy;<sup>1</sup> but a sense of its importance so impresses him that he returns to the subject here,—as we shall find him doing once more in the 4th verse of the next chapter,—‘*for*,’ says he, ‘*to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*’ The natural tendency of a mind so energetic and originative as Paul’s was to expatriate ever in fresh fields; but he knew it to be in many cases ‘*safe*’—eminently salutary—for his readers, that he should keep certain truths much before their minds, and therefore Christian love made it ‘*not grievous*’ to him to do this. The apostle here indirectly gives a hint not unneeded in our time, I think, by both ministers and congregations. The greater the freshness with which divine truth can be illustrated, the better always, because thus interest is maintained; but it must never be forgotten that the same truth, substantially, which nourished our souls last year—the same truth, substantially, which nourished the souls of Paul and the Philippians—must sustain us this year also, and on to death, and through death. However much a Christian may be interested in various lines of religious speculation, yet he *lives* spiritually through the loving, believing contemplation of those grand central verities which have become the commonplaces of our religious knowledge. ‘To say the same things’ to their hearers, then, unaltered essentially, whatever variety and newness there be in form, will not be ‘*grievous*’ to earnest ministers of Jesus Christ, because for their hearers it is ‘*safe*.’ The craving for novelty and originality, which is particularly apt to beset both preachers and hearers in an age like ours, so full of sensationalism in life and in literature, passes very easily from the innocent into the morbid; and is often, really, one cannot but fear, the outcome of repugnance to the soul-humbling ‘*faith once delivered to the saints.*’ It was not a sign of health or of wisdom, when the Israelites said of the manna which they had been eating for forty years, ‘*Our soul loatheth this light bread.*’

<sup>1</sup> Generally, in chap. i. 25, 26; in special connections, ii. 18, 28.

Having thus glanced at the meaning of the verse generally, we shall go on now to consider the force of the apostle's precept somewhat more in detail.

To an unregenerate man the happiness of Christians is unintelligible. It belongs to a sphere with which he has no acquaintance. He sees, to a certain extent, the restraints which religion imposes ; but of its blessed communion with God he sees and can apprehend nothing. Its hopes appear to him visionary ; and point to a kind of future life for which he has no desire. His heart knows that the pleasures of the world do not yield him full satisfaction, and cries out more or less articulately for some nobler and better happiness ; but the mists which natural alienation from God has gathered around him prevent him from seeing that the cup of salvation, offered him by Jesus, holds the water of life which can slake his soul's thirst. He cannot think the 'yoke' of Jesus to be 'easy,' and His 'burden' to be 'light,' and that to bear this 'yoke' and 'burden' is, in truth, rest. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'

But the man who, through faith, is 'in the Lord,' and thus, taught by His indwelling Spirit, has true wisdom, sees ever more clearly, if there be in him any approach to vigorous religious vitality, the reasonableness of his being happy. Even if at times he is not happy, still he feels that a Christian *ought* to be happy. Nothing in God's universe certainly is so fitted to produce and sustain gladness of spirit as the boundless, unwearying, tender love of the Saviour. Out in the world we found that the springs and streams might be named 'Marah,' because the water was bitter ; but in Christ our hearts are satisfied with blessing. 'With joy we draw water out of the wells of salvation.' Gently and tenderly, not harshly reminding us of our rebellion and folly, but cheering our hearts with looks and tones of comfort, He has led us home,—away from the

wilderness of our wanderings and woe to the city that He has built for our security. And the citizens of the spiritual Zion may well ‘be joyful in their King.’ What city, dear friends, is like unto our city? ‘Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion.’ ‘Glorious things are spoken of the city of God.’ ‘He hath called her walls Salvation, and her gates Praise.’ From her towers Christ’s people can see the billows of Satan’s warfare rushing on in wild fury, but broken on the walls and scattered into thin foam. Within the walls is peace, and ‘prosperity within her palaces.’ Through the midst of the city flows the river of life; and on either side of the river are seen the far-stretching branches of the tree of life, whose fragrance is wafted through every street, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The Saviour King Himself abides among us. You have seen His face and heard His voice, have you not, Christian brethren? In His relations to us He shows matchless tenderness and condescension. He mingles kindly with His people. To all our petitions His ear is open; to all our wants His bounteous hand. We find His law to be a simple one,—that we should desire and strive after all that is noble and beautiful and good—that we should be pure, and loving, and patient, and godly. Love for Him makes the law pleasant to us; and we learn every day to love it more and more for its own excellence. Thus ‘His yoke is easy, and His burden light.’ His service is ‘glorious liberty.’ In the sorrows of life we never look in vain to Him for sympathy, tender and brotherly,—for He remembers the old time when He Himself dwelt out in the wilderness, and when He wept at the grave of His friend. When the weakness and folly of our days of wandering come back upon us for a time, and we sin,—we find Him no hard, avenging taskmaster, but a gracious Lord. ‘The people that dwell in Zion are forgiven their iniquity.’ Our gracious Redeemer, as ye know, dear brethren, is to us in all things a light, a glory, and a defence. In every danger, and perplexity, and sorrow, here rests our

confidence, that ‘The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King,—He will save us.’ It is certainly reasonable, my friends, that all who are ‘in the Lord’ should rejoice in His goodness.

We have perfect security, too, that His kindness will be *continued* to us. No power can pluck us out of our Saviour’s hand; for, in Him, with ineffable goodness is conjoined an infinite greatness—a power, and wealth, and wisdom, which pass knowledge. This is ‘the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.’ ‘His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.’ In Him, to the truest and tenderest sympathy of a man who has struggled and suffered as we have, are united all the perfections of supreme Godhead. We have many and bitter spiritual enemies; but if we be ‘in the Lord,’ we cannot by possibility be permanently vanquished. The plan of defence is conceived by His wisdom ‘whose understanding is infinite;’ all the details are carried out, and the human and other instrumentalities controlled, by Him ‘whose eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him;’ and the ends are certainly and gloriously secured by His power who ‘doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.’ ‘Have we not known, have we not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary;’ and that He, this everlasting God—who ‘was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;’—that *He* is the Saviour in whom we are called to trust? ‘Beautiful exceedingly are the feet of them who say unto Zion, “Thy God reigneth.”’

Your security is *perfect*, Christian;—and for ever. The law of death throws a shadow over all mere earthly friendship and protection and joy; but they that are ‘in the Lord’ may rejoice in the knowledge of unending love and care. Jesus died for

sin once ; but having, by His glorious resurrection, proved Himself the Prince of Life, He is now ‘alive for evermore,’—alive for evermore as the God-man, our Kinsman Redeemer. His immortality is the immortality of His goodness and of His greatness. There will be no change throughout eternity in His full desert of the warmest love and gratitude and devotion of His people. Whom He loveth, He ‘loveth *to the end.*’ And through this undying love, ‘because He liveth,’ all who are in Him ‘live also,’ in holiness and joy kindred to His,—and this for evermore. We must leave the Zion below indeed, but the gracious Saviour has built for us a far more glorious Zion above. Thither ‘shall come the ransomed of the Lord, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.’ The joys which we find so sweet in Zion here, are but faint foretastes of those which are provided for us there. Here ‘we know in part;’ there ‘we shall know even as also we are known.’ Here we see but dimly, through faith, Him whom our souls love ; there, face to face, we shall ‘behold the King in His beauty,’ we shall be ravished with the ‘open vision’ of ‘the Altogether Lovely.’ Here on earth, even in Zion, are found sin and its constant shadows, death and sorrow ; but by the river of life yonder there is ‘nothing that defileth,’ and, consequently, ‘no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain.’ The King’s servants there ‘serve Him day and night in His temple;’ and He ‘wipes away all tears from their eyes.’

Certainly, my brethren, a Christian has good grounds for a happiness infinitely transcending all the pleasure which can be yielded by any advantages of the world—‘a joy unspeakable and full of glory.’ He may well say, ‘I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.’

The intelligent believer finds every day new sustenance for spiritual happiness in the view of God's doings without, as well as in his growing experimental acquaintance with saving grace. 'In the Lord,' we know His Father as our Father. The divine dealings toward us, therefore, of every kind, we recognise as Fatherly dealings. Thus, in the contemplation of providence, there is for us an unfailing source of joy. In the days before our spiritual enlightenment, when,

'In blindness, we remained unconscious of the guiding,  
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,'

—the pleasure which prosperity brought us was of a low character, belonging largely indeed, in many cases, to the mere animal nature. It 'perished with the using.' Now, the natural satisfaction which outward comforts bring is pervaded and glorified by the thankfulness of hearts rejoicing in their Father's goodness. This joy tends to become ever deeper and richer, with growing spiritual wisdom and experience. The voice of praise in the new man becomes ever more distinct and ringing, —' Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.' But adversity may come. Clouds may gather, and hide the sun. Anxiety, pain, bereavement, may be appointed to us. True ; but the fact that a *Father* has appointed the trouble, that the clouds have been gathered by a *Father's* word, will prevent despondency, and maintain peace. He has sent the affliction to us for the purposes of wise and gracious discipline ; and He makes 'all things to work together for good to them that love Him.' Joy, in the sense of buoyant delight, may scarce be possible, seeing that 'no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.' Eminently lofty faith can reach even to this point. Paul speaks of himself in one place as 'sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ;' and in another, as 'filled with comfort, exceeding joyful in all his tribulation.' But, though such a sublime height as this may be rarely attained by the children

of God, when in sore trial, yet the heart of every believer who is in spiritual health will ‘rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.’ It is with the Christian soul as with the ocean,—the wildest tempests ruffle only the surface; the depths are tranquil.

The ordinary innocent enjoyments of life obtain ‘in the Lord’ a new charm. He who began His miracles by contributing to social pleasure, does, in truth, for His people, everywhere and at all times, change the water into wine—the common into the noble, refreshing, brightening. To think of our capacities of joy, and the means of gratifying those capacities, as given by Him who ‘gave Himself for us,’ and whom the faith of a simple, loving, Christian heart can see looking down with a smile of love on all really innocent pleasure,—this glorifies even the delights of earth. Friendship has an added sweetness,—nature a new and glorious beauty, as when on a landscape which lay in gloom the sunlight breaks forth,—study a satisfaction altogether peculiar, in that now all intellectual improvement is felt to be polishing a shaft for the Master’s quiver.

But the Christian has a source of joy all his own, immeasurably deeper and more satisfying than any which are only of the earth,—in the service of Christ, and in seeing the progress of His kingdom. Next to the ineffable delight of seeing Jesus as our own Saviour, is the delight which fills the believer’s heart in helping others to see Him as theirs. ‘What is our joy; or crown of rejoicing?’ says Paul to His converts in Thessalonica, —‘Are not even ye?’ To be permitted to take part in the Saviour’s great work of overthrowing the sin and wretchedness of the world, and preparing a people for His praise and for eternal blessedness,—to guide a wanderer into the way of peace,—to hear a prodigal, for whom we have prayed and with whom we have pleaded, cry, ‘I will arise and go to my Father,’ —Oh, my brethren, how sublime an honour this is,—how exquisite a privilege! The news, too, of the progress of the

gospel, through the efforts of other labourers, is ‘good tidings of great joy’ to the earnest servant of Christ. It gladdens his heart to look abroad and see the name of his Saviour magnified. All praise to Him, my brethren, that this joy is given to us so largely in these days,—that in so many lands, and in so many languages, the heralds of the cross are making their proclamation of grace,—that the trumpet call rings so loudly in the ear of the church, ‘Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,—that even now sanguine hope sees the strongholds of Satan tottering to their fall !

The reasons for the indisputable fact that *many Christians have but little experience of spiritual joy*, are various. In some, the defect is in a great measure due to *temperament*. Of this class the Apostle Thomas may be taken as a type,—a man evidently by natural constitution moody, prone to look on the worst side of things, unable often to see springs of happiness which God had opened very near him. In many, as all our lunatic asylums bear witness, this nervous tendency to religious melancholy develops into positive insanity. There occurs at once to every mind the case of Cowper,—a Christian not merely signally gifted, but whose walk was eminently ‘close with God,’ yet much of whose life, and in particular its closing years, were spent in the darkness of utter despair. The care of a wise physician, and the watchful love of friends, may be of some service to this class of joyless Christians. But with some, as with Cowper, the darkness remains unbroken, till death, the final and perfect cloud-dispeller for all who love Christ, brings relief. Oh, how kind a friend he whom nature calls ‘the last enemy’ approved himself, when

‘Woke the poet from the dream his life’s long fever gave him,  
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which closed in death to save him !  
. . . . No type of earth can image that awaking,—  
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him breaking,  
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,  
But felt those Eyes alone, and knew, “*My Saviour ! not deserted !*” ’

In other believers, again, spiritual gloom is caused by *de-*

fective apprehension of the fulness and freeness of the gospel. The 'glorious liberty of the children of God' is by these but partially understood, so that, whilst at times rejoicing in the air of freedom, they ever and anon fall back under 'the spirit of bondage, again to fear.' If in Christians thus imperfectly enlightened there be a lively imagination, which brings with vividness before them 'the terrors of God, setting themselves in array against them,' the distress of soul is often very terrible. The experiences of Luther and of Bunyan, in the earlier years of their religious life, afford illustrations. In cases of this kind, where the nature is at all really healthy, growing knowledge of God and of His gospel gives emancipation.

But yet again,—in a lamentably large number of instances, the want of joy in religion is due to *feeble spirituality, and indulgence in sin*. Worldliness, perhaps, like a killing parasite on the trees of the wood, has wreathed itself round the energies of the soul, stifling and deadening. Or the pleasures of social life have stolen away the time once given to communion with God in prayer, and to kindly visits, 'in the behalf of Christ,' to the sick and poor. Desire of self-gratification in some form has for a time gained dominion; and the result is the loss of joy. Mists inevitably rise from a soul which is cherishing sinful desire, and hide the face of God. We all know the circumstances under which David had to pray, '*Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.*' It is well for a believer who has thus forgotten himself and his Saviour, when positive gloom takes possession of him. There is reason to hope that repentance, and the opening of his heart again to the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness, are at hand. In the sadness there is evidence that the Spirit is resuming the discharge of His mission as the Comforter, by 'convincing of sin.' Far more really melancholy is the condition of those who have allowed themselves to come down into a state of simple indifference,—the heart lacking alike

'the joy of the Lord,' and pain, through the sense that this joy is lacking.

The verse now before us represents it as a *duty* of believers to be happy. Here, as in other places of his writings, the apostle gives 'Rejoice in the Lord' distinctly as an injunction. In such a connection, the word 'duty' or 'injunction' sounds strangely to us. We ask, 'Is this, then, a matter of the will?' The case of joy in this respect is closely analogous, I apprehend, to that of faith and love, neither of which is *immediately* dependent on the will, but both of which are expressly enjoined as duties. 'This is God's *commandment*', says the Apostle John, 'that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ,—and love one another, as He gave us commandment.' The *immediate* practical force of these words of John is, no doubt, this,—'God commands us to *examine*, with seriousness and candour, the evidence that Jesus is His Son, and the Saviour of the world. Examined in such a spirit, the evidence will certainly produce conviction; and one fruit of the truth believed will certainly be a sincere and strong affection to the Christian brotherhood.' Similarly the precept, 'Rejoice in the Lord,' means practically, 'Have your thoughts much occupied with the blessedness, and glory, and security, of the relations into which faith has brought you with the Lord; try, by thoughtfulness and prayer, to live in an atmosphere of childlike trustfulness in your heavenly Father; in seasons of peculiarly strong temptation to gloom, direct your minds with peculiar intensity to the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Divine Word. Thus your souls will be filled with joy.' The injunction, like all God's injunctions, is a most reasonable one.

The duty is an *important* one, too. The tone of the apostle here and elsewhere brings this out very clearly. Nothing is more calculated to commend the gospel to those around us, than proof that its influence on the hearts which receive it is to make them bright and happy. This commendation is, of

course, specially impressive, where outward circumstances are of a kind naturally tending to sadden. When, in deep poverty, or on a bed of pain, a Christian is contented, calm, joyous ; there is here ‘an epistle of Christ’ written in letters so large and fair, that even careless observers can hardly help reading its testimony to the reality and potency of divine grace. Where the lights of this world have been in so large a measure withdrawn, it must be plain that such brightness of heart can come only through a beam of sunshine straight from heaven to that heart. For the spiritual progress of the believer himself, too, it is of very much moment that he ‘rejoice in the Lord.’ Nehemiah’s statement holds true for all time : ‘The joy of the Lord is your *strength*.’ We know the power of happiness, of a genial, buoyant spirit, in carrying forward the ordinary work of life. In the work of the spiritual life—resistance to temptation, and earnest labour for the Master—there is no sustaining power to be compared with joy. Walking in darkness, enveloped in spiritual gloom, we move slowly, stumble, fall. In the sunshine, we press forward with bounding step in the way of God’s commandments, ‘running, and not weary ;’—wherefore, ‘O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.’

## XIX.

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

'Beware of dogs ; beware of evil workers ; beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'—PHIL. iii. 2-9.

THE power of Jesus over the hearts of His people, my brethren, is, as you know, the power of Godhead sweetly linked in everlasting union with that of human brotherhood. 'The Word that was God became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' The sympathy of the Brother who once struggled and suffered and felt weak and weary, as we do, is very sweet to us. In seasons when the night of sorrow and fear gathers dark around us, how it strengthens to feel the warm, kind hand of the human Saviour taking hold of ours to lead us,—the human Saviour, who has divine power and wisdom ! To this peculiar power in the incarnate Word, the personal Revelation of God, there is some-

thing similar in the written word or revelation of God. It is easy to conceive that the Bible might have consisted wholly of direct divine utterances, such as those which the old prophets introduced by their 'Thus saith the Lord,'—with the writers simply mechanical organs of communication. Men's own thoughts, indeed, in regard to a promised revelation of God's will, would probably have anticipated such a Bible. But the tenderness of the divine love—the willingness of our heavenly Father to care for all the needs of His children—is seen in the fact that, in a very large part of Scripture, human feeling plainly pulsates freely, while yet all is of God. This feature is particularly marked in the letters of the apostles; and every thoughtful reader knows the winningness of influence thus given to them. The teaching which is so divine, and yet so human, draws us to love it, as the Divine Man Himself draws us.

A person seriously impressed with the importance of religion is like a man who finds himself called upon by matters of the highest moment to undertake a long and difficult journey, through countries wholly different in every respect from any with which his previous life has made him acquainted. He has, perhaps, accurate maps and carefully written sketches of the physical and political geography of the lands through which he has to pass. Still, how satisfying for him to meet a traveller who has personally accomplished the journey, and faithfully relates his experiences! Now the apostolic letters, taken together, and comparing one part with another, may be regarded as a kind of journal of travel, a diary of pilgrimage, from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. We find set before us in them, with the utmost liveliness and fulness of detail, the aims, the failures, the successes, the hopes and fears and difficulties, of men naturally like ourselves depraved, but regenerated by that same grace which is freely offered to us. All the points of the route, and all the varieties of experience connected with them, come successively into view,—Valleys of

Humiliation and of the Shadow of Death, Delectable Mountains and Plains of Beulah,—battles with the prince of evil, and hours of rest in the House Beautiful. This precious record does not, indeed, introduce us actually into the golden city, but it brings us to the very gates,—and the gates are ajar, to give us a glimpse of the glory. Nay, we seem even to hear the joy-bells already ringing for the welcome of the new citizen about to enter,—‘I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.’ But whilst this diary of spiritual travel, as I have called it, is thoroughly human, most really and honestly setting forth the movements of these men’s souls, yet it is not less truly divine. Just here lies its perfect adaptation to our circumstances. It is most fully and winningly man’s, and yet also most certainly and satisfactorily God’s. The spirits of the apostles speak to us, and at the same time everywhere, through them, the Spirit of God. The diary of the pilgrims is the King’s authorized and perfect guide to the way.

No passage in the writings of the apostles, I think, better illustrates that most interesting feature of divine revelation of which I have been speaking, than the paragraph now before us. In reading it, every Christian is sensible that, in his heart, deep interest in the spiritual struggles of his fellow-man Paul stands side by side with thankful acceptance of the profound and precious divine teaching.

You observe that in the 2d verse an entirely new subject is introduced, and this with a suddenness which, I think, you can hardly help feeling to be somewhat startling. Throughout the paragraph, too, a reader is conscious of a quicker movement in the language than in the previous verses, indicating, it is natural to suppose, excitement of feeling in the writer. Taking these facts in connection with the apparent intimation in the ‘Finally’ of the 1st verse, that at that point the apostle had nearly ended what he meant to say to his Philippian friends, whilst in fact

almost half the letter is yet before us,—it seems not improbable that, just after that 1st verse had been written, Paul received information of some fresh outbreak of hostility to pure Christianity on the part of his Judaizing opponents in Rome, those of whom he has said in the first chapter that they ‘preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to his bonds;’ or possibly of their pestilent activity in some other church,—and that he was thus led to warn the Philippians against the poison of such men’s teaching.

The great thought illustrated in the passage is that *humility*—the absence of self-righteousness—renunciation of confidence in everything except divine grace—is of the essence of vital, saving religion. The most satisfactory mode of treatment, therefore, may be, perhaps, to glance first at the subject generally, and then, with the principles clearly before our minds, to examine the details of the apostle’s statement.

The grand fundamental truth of morals, my brethren, is that God’s will is absolutely perfect, and therefore that, in His creatures, goodness is simply harmony of will with Him. Only on this principle, accepted as a basis, can a character truly beautiful and noble be reared. Wherever divergence enters—any thought of the possession of wisdom to construct for ourselves, without the teaching of God, a satisfactory plan of life,—there are folly and sin. You remember that, in the Lord’s great parabolic picture of sin and grace, desire to be independent of God, and the fancy that a scheme of life of man’s own invention can yield happiness, are exhibited as the spring of sin. ‘A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.’ The root of all sin, you see, and thus of all misery, is pride—resolution to assert against God a claim to self-control.

Accordingly, God’s plan of salvation for men—which has as its great aim our moral renovation, the lifting of us up into a new sphere of thought and feeling—has at every point what is

calculated to lead us to view God alone as the Fountain of wisdom, and strength, and happiness. The gospel proclaims explicitly everywhere that, from the nature of things, God must have all the glory of man's deliverance, and that only those who cordially consent that it should be so can be delivered. So long as we dream of being in any measure independent of Him, we keep ourselves beyond the sweep of salvation. 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'

The claim of the divine law is, that man should render to God perfect obedience, or suffer death as the penalty of disobedience. Our whole race has sinned, and thus become liable to the penalty. But the Son of God, freely given by His Father, freely giving Himself, has assumed our nature, and as our Substitute—accepted as such by His Father, who in the scheme of redemption sustains the majesty of the Godhead—has fulfilled all the law's requirements,—living a true human life of holy obedience, as we were bound to do, and dying the death of pain and shame which we deserve to suffer. To all who believe the gospel, and are thus led to place their confidence in Christ, God, of His infinite mercy, imputes this perfect righteousness of the Saviour—reckons it as theirs—treats them as if they had themselves been righteous, like their Representative. This is the great doctrine of justification by faith. You see how humbling it is to man. The faith through which we obtain justification involves an acknowledgment of the reality and exceeding evil of our sin, and of our own utter helplessness. We come to God confessing that the robe of our personal character is but 'filthy rags,' in which we dare not stand in His sight; and we receive from Him the ample, stainless, fragrant robe of the Redeemer's righteousness.

Now the same pride that leads men to their life of sin naturally prompts them to resist the claims of the gospel, which offers them, on such terms, deliverance from the curse and power of sin. Most naturally also, in a vast multitude of cases where Christian teaching is to some extent accepted, the

acceptance is, through the self-deceiving energy of the heart, of teaching so modified as to leave pride still room for exercise, and, just in so far, to remove from God's message the element which makes it the 'gospel,' the word of glad tidings to ruined men. In persons who, from temperament or circumstances, have been awakened to a sense of the reality and ill-desert of their sin, the question 'How shall I be saved?' sometimes takes the form of 'What shall I *endure* for salvation?' As the heathen asks, 'Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' so, under Romish Christianity, penances and ascetic austerities are resorted to as a propitiation for guilt. The pride of self-righteousness is gratified by the thought that the sinner does something for himself to supplement the atoning work of Jesus; but foul dishonour is thus cast on the perfect sacrifice of Calvary. Among those who, like ourselves, have been brought up under the influences of Protestantism, the opposition of the carnal nature to the humbling work of the gospel much more frequently takes the form of a desire to *do* something meritorious, 'that we may inherit eternal life.' It is greatly to be feared, dear brethren, that a very large number of professing Christians satisfy themselves with the outward decorum of religious service,—their inward thought, not acknowledged definitely to themselves, yet really being in God's sight, 'We are quiet, moral, church-going people; and what more could God reasonably expect?' Ah, friends, this is folly, fatal folly; and 'the day shall declare it.' A hope resting on any fancied righteousness of our own is utterly baseless; and 'when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it must fall,—and great shall be the fall of it.' When the Lord God 'lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place, and men's covenant with hell shall be disannulled, and their

agreement with hell shall not stand.' But the righteousness of Christ, which God counts as the righteousness of every man who believes in Christ, is the 'rock of ages.' Whoso has built here, will find, in the hour of fiercest tempest, that his dwelling stands secure.

Let us proceed now to look at the details of the paragraph. The warning against being turned away from the simplicity of Christian faith by the perverting words of Judaizing teachers, with which it begins—and which, as I have already said, was not improbably called forth by the apostle's receipt of some news just when he had reached this part of the letter—is expressed very tersely and pointedly, and in language of stern indignation against these men. In using '*the*' in each clause of the 2nd verse, though given in our translation only in the last,—'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision,'—he not merely shows that he has a well-defined class of persons in his mind, but assumes that his Philippian readers would know at once to whom he referred.

He depicts the character of these teachers by the name '*dogs*',—as our Lord, you remember, called Herod the tetrarch 'that fox.' The dog, so valued and loved among us, as man's faithful and affectionate companion and helper, seems never to have been similarly regarded in the East. Most of the dogs seen in an Eastern town are masterless curs, ever annoying passers-by, and seeking their food amid the offal of the streets. Impudence and disgusting impurity of life are therefore the ideas which rise first to the mind of an Oriental in connection with the dog,—among the Jews apparently the latter idea especially. With this force, for example, you remember, the Apostle John in the Apocalypse, in speaking of exclusion from the city of God, says, 'Without are dogs' (Rev. xxii. 15). In calling these Judaizing teachers by this name, then, Paul intimates seemingly that a considerable number of them had already, by some forms of moral impurity, proved the tendency of their system—as of every system

which draws away men from spiritual religion—to be to practical wickedness. There may not improbably also be another thought here. We know that the Jews were in the habit of calling the heathen ‘dogs,’ as the Mohammedans do Christians now. Our Lord, for a most gracious end, once adopted this usage, when, in testing the faith of a Gentile woman, He said, ‘It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.’ Now, in the verse before us, apparently, Paul, by his application of the word, intimates that those who would subject Christian converts from heathenism to the Jewish ritual were, by the ignorance they thus displayed of the spirit of Christianity, almost placing themselves outside of the pale of the true spiritual Israel, into which those despised Gentiles had entered by faith. This idea he brings out expressly in the next verse.

The apostle further describes the teachers, without a figure, as ‘*the evil workers*,’—labourers, professedly, in the service of the Lord Jesus, but really wicked, aiming to subvert rather than to establish the truth.

Then he points out the foolish and untenable character of their peculiar doctrine, by giving them, as a sect, the derisive name of ‘*the concision*’—that is, ‘the cutting, or mutilation.’ They gloried in calling themselves ‘*the circumcision*’—the circumcised—the bearers of the seal of God’s covenant with Abraham. But in trying to impose the yoke of the ritual of a preparatory typical system on all who came to Christ, they showed that they wholly misunderstood the relations to each other, and the real spirit, both of Judaism and Christianity, and relied on some mystical power of mere outward services. For a class of men like this the apostle deemed the name ‘circumcision,’ with its hallowed spiritual associations, altogether unsuited; and therefore, by a little play on the word, well imitated in our version, he calls them ‘*the concision*,’ or ‘*cutting*,’—a name with which nothing sacred stood connected. They were the sect of ‘*the cutters of the flesh*,’—nothing more.

The spirit of these false teachers has always been active in the Christian church, though the particular form against which Paul was called on to contend has long passed away. Popery so loads religion with ritual and earthliness, as to make it exceedingly difficult for its votaries to have true fellowship with the Saviour. In the Church of England, at present, a more exact analogy is exhibited to the struggle which the Apostle Paul, and the other enlightened servants of Christ in the first age, had to maintain with the Judaizers, than has perhaps ever been seen since those days. A considerable proportion of the ministers of that church approach Romanism more or less closely in opinion and practices. These are very active, both in the towns and country districts, undermining Protestant sentiment, neutralizing evangelical effort, poisoning the minds of the people with the pestilent doctrines of priestly prerogative and sacramental grace, fascinating the young with flowers and music, shows and ceremonies, and all the beauty and splendour of a gorgeous ritualism. With this host of Romanizers, corresponding in many respects, very exactly in spirit and aim, to Paul's Judaizing opponents, the evangelical ministers and members of the church, aided by their Non-conformist brethren, have to do battle; and they most reasonably claim our prayers, that they may be endued with needful wisdom and energy, and that their efforts may be crowned with success.

In Scotland, the Reformation was far more thorough than in England, eschewing all such compromises between Popery and scriptural simplicity as are found in the system of the Church of England, and have opened the way for the state of things to which I have referred. Thus we are in no great danger of being brought into any struggle precisely similar to that now carried on in England. But the hazard of formalism —of unconsciously regarding the outward means of grace as of necessity carrying with them efficient saving grace—is great with us, as in every section of Christ's church.

In the 3d verse the apostle states his reason for the emphatic condemnation he has, in the 2nd, given of the doctrine of the Judaizers. This, which, as I have explained, has been perhaps already hinted at in the application to them of the term ‘dogs,’ is that all Christians, Jews and Gentiles alike,—all who rejoice in the fulfilment of the promise which cheered the patriarchs,—are, simply as being Christians, of the true Israel, the true seed of Abraham. The particular form in which this reason is couched has been determined by the name last given to the misleading teachers, ‘the *concision*.’ ‘*For*,’ says the apostle, ‘*we are the circumcision*,’—‘*we*,’ all believers in Jesus Christ, you the Gentiles and I the Jew equally,—‘*which worship God in the spirit*,’ understanding that the service of the heart is alone acceptable to Him, and that outward forms are pleasing to Him only in so far as they are expressive of this, or tributary to it,—‘*and rejoice* (rather, “*glory*”) *in Christ Jesus*,’ ever delighting to set forth to our own souls, and to all around, His excellences, His perfection as Mediator,—‘*and have no confidence in the flesh*,’ being sensible of the utter folly of resting any hope on ceremonies, or on any works of ourselves or of our fellow-men; for ‘*flesh*’ here, as very frequently, in its obvious contrast with ‘*spirit*,’ designates what is external generally.

According to a slightly different reading of the original text in this verse, one which has the support of the great majority of the most ancient manuscripts, the first part of the apostle’s description of the true Israel is, ‘*which worship by the Spirit of God*,’ instead of ‘*which worship God in the Spirit*.’ There is here no substantial difference of meaning. The truth, however, is brought into prominence, that the spirit of man can rise from the control of the deadening influences of sin into true healthfulness of delight in God’s love and service only through the energy of the Divine Spirit. As in the old creation ‘*the Lord God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life*,’ and he became a living soul,—so in the new. But for the

breath of the Spirit of God, man would continue ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ And the sustenance as well as the origination of spiritual life is wholly His.

The truths which the apostle has stated,—that God’s ‘peculiar people,’ His Israel in the only sense which implies salvation, are the spiritually-minded, and that any teaching which tends to produce confidence in ‘the flesh,’ that is, in anything external, is false,—he proceeds to illustrate in a very lively way, by a reference to his own religious history. ‘I have said that the true circumcision, the real heirs of the promises made to the patriarchs, are all those who, exulting in Christ as their Mediator, have no confidence in the flesh. I say this to you with fullest earnestness,—though, be it observed, I do not look at the matter from the position of a stranger to the commonwealth of the natural Israel, in whom jealousy might perhaps be supposed to awaken such thoughts; but, if there were any soundness in the principles of these teachers, *I might myself have confidence in the flesh also*, as supplementary to the mediation of Christ. *If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.*’ He felt that in regard to legal standing he could say at least as much for himself as any other Jew, and in some particulars probably more than any other.

He goes on to catalogue the goods which, in the days before he knew the Saviour, he had supposed to make him rich,—to rehearse the facts which he had deemed to give him an impregnable position of honour and safety before God and man, for time and for eternity. In the first place, he ‘had Abraham to his father,’ and was of the purest blood of the chosen race. He had been ‘circumcised the eighth day,’ according to the command given to Abraham for all his descendants, and renewed in the law of Moses. He was born, then, of parents who kept the law; and, further, these not proselytes from heathenism or descendants of proselytes, for he was ‘*of the stock of Israel;*’ and this in an honourable tribe, one of the two which had re-

mained faithful to the house of David, and in which something of loyalty to their Divine King had continued after it had died out among the northern ten,—‘*of the tribe of Benjamin.*’ He was of *pure* Jewish blood, too; not, for example, like Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess, but his father a Greek. The tables of Paul’s genealogy showed him to be of unmixed race, ‘*an Hebrew of the Hebrews,*’—an Israelite sprung from Israelites. It is not improbable that in this last expression there is also a reference to a distinction which was made in Paul’s days between two classes of Jews, and which is alluded to again and again in Acts,—for instance, when we are told that the appointment of the seven deacons was occasioned by ‘a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews’ (Acts vi. 1)—that is, of those Jews who, being natives of foreign countries, spoke only Greek, against those, mainly but not exclusively natives of Palestine, who retained the language which represented the Hebrew of their fathers. Paul, though born in Tarsus, a city where Greek was spoken, had been educated in the Hebrew metropolis, under a most distinguished Hebrew teacher; he spoke Hebrew fluently (Acts xxi. 40); and his quotations from the Old Testament are frequently in such a form as to show that he was familiar with it in the original language, and translated for himself. By calling himself ‘*a Hebrew of the Hebrews,*’ then, the apostle may naturally be supposed to intimate, not merely that he was of pure Jewish extraction, but that he had inherited from his parents, and from the whole line of his ancestors, a strong affection for the national language and religion and manners. Thus far then of his lineage. On this head certainly no Jew could have more ‘confidence in the flesh’ than Paul.

But what of His personal character? Here also he felt that, if he chose to assume the position of his opponents, and, as he elsewhere expresses it, to ‘speak as a fool,’ he could say much for himself,—as much certainly as any of his ‘brethren after the flesh,’ and far more than most. ‘*As touching the law,*

his views of its sacredness and importance were shown by his having become '*a Pharisee*,' a member of the 'most straitest sect' of the Jews. '*Concerning zeal*' for the ancient faith, as understood by the scribes and Pharisees, what higher could be said—what more conclusive evidence of ardour given—than that he had been well known as '*persecuting the church*' of Christ, '*making havoc*' of it, '*entering into every house, haling men and women and committing them to prison*,' and '*breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*'? Still further, however. History tells us that a man may loudly profess his devotion to certain religious principles, and even be a persecutor on behalf of them, while yet they have no power over his private conduct. But it was not so with Paul. He not merely, as a Pharisee, made an orthodox profession, and, as a persecutor, showed his zeal against those who differed from him in opinion, but, '*touching the righteousness which is in the law*'—such supposed righteousness as consists in obedience to precepts regarding outward conduct, while the heart may entertain a spirit of rebellion with respect to '*the weightier matters of the law*,' being full of pride and uncharitableness,—'*touching this righteousness*,' he was '*blameless*.' The omission of no observance, however trivial, could justly be laid to his charge. He could boldly say before Agrippa, '*My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that, after the most straitest sect of our religion, I—not merely professed myself, but—lived a Pharisee.*'

Such is the apostle's list of the facts about himself, regarding which he had once delighted to say to his soul, '*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up*,'—the grounds on which he had thought that he might most justly claim the favour of God. The list sounds much as if you or I were to say something of this kind: '*I am of a good Presbyterian stock. One of my ancestors fought at Bothwell Bridge for "Christ's crown and*

covenant," and another died as a martyr in the same cause in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh. There have been several ministers in my line, and many elders. I was baptized in a Presbyterian church, attended the Sabbath school, and became a communicant when I was eighteen. I have always attended the church regularly, kept up family worship, and lived a decorous life. I am well read in sound theology ; hold rigidly in my opinions by the Westminster Confession ; and have now and again taken a part in controversies about election, or the extent of the atonement.' This is all well, very well,—so far as it goes. But if you or I be in any degree looking to these things—to any of them, or to all of them taken together—as a ground of hope for eternity, we are, in so far, occupying a religious position corresponding very exactly with that of Paul before his conversion to Christ. Let us hear, then, what he ultimately thought about the pure Hebrew birth, and legal immaculateness, which were once his pride.

'*What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*' His conception of the relations between himself and God had in those old days been essentially mercantile ; for this is the basis of all self-righteousness. The advantages of which he has given an inventory had all been mentally entered by him in a kind of religious account-book as 'gains,' facts distinctly to his 'credit.' But when the truth and the beauty of the gospel were, by God's mercy, brought clearly before him, then he set them down as '*Loss*,'—'*for Christ*,' 'on account of Christ'—that is, because it was plain to him now that salvation was to be found only in Christ, and that therefore anything which kept a man back from Christ, or weakened his hold of Christ, was a positive and great spiritual detriment. It is important to note carefully the sense in which the statement is made. Paul's connection by birth with the covenant nation,—the careful religious education which his parents had given him,—and the pure morality which he had been enabled to maintain in his life from the beginning,—were in themselves great

advantages, for which, I doubt not, he praised God to the end of his life. Very few earthly blessings can be even compared with that of godly parentage, and those influences of a well-ordered home which keep the young from ‘knowing the depths of Satan.’ Vice always tends to harden the heart against God; and though divine grace may bring men back, and has brought men back, from very grievous wanderings, yet evil memories, and evil imaginings, make the spiritual struggles of such in most cases peculiarly hard. As has been finely said, ‘This is one of the sorest trials of a renewed life, that it is built over dark dungeons, where dead things may be buried but not forgotten, and where through the open grating rank vapours still ascend.’<sup>1</sup> But while this is true, it is also true that, as occurred in the apostle’s case, the very privileges which, in their own nature, are fitted to prepare men for the gospel and lead them to Christ, may be so abused by the carnal heart as to be made sustenance for self-righteousness. Wherever this has been the case, wherever a man has in any degree thought of Christian parentage, and propriety of life, as the purchase-money of the favour of God,—then, if he ultimately yield himself to Christ, he cannot but, in looking back upon his history, call his very privileges ‘loss,’ in so far—but only in so far—as they had kept him back from Christ.

‘Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’ We naturally put emphasis on ‘all things,’ and take the statement to mean, ‘I esteem everything in the world worthless in comparison with the saving knowledge of Christ.’ Such is, indeed, the feeling of every believer. His love and admiration of his Saviour are so strong, that all which nature values appears to dwindle utterly in the presence of the Lord. ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.’ In the present passage, however, the meaning

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Ker.

is somewhat different. ‘*Loss*’ is to be taken, as its being put in the 7th verse in express contrast with ‘gain’ shows, not loosely, as equivalent to ‘valueless,’ but strictly, as positive detriment, positive lessening of good. Then, as is sufficiently plain in the original, the emphasis is really on ‘*count*,’ as contrasted with ‘*counted*’ of the previous verse; and the unemphatic ‘*all things*’ simply refers to the ‘what things were gain to me’ already mentioned, and would be made clearer to an English reader by such a rendering as ‘them all,’ ‘all of them,’—all things which, in his days of darkness, the apostle had reckoned ‘gains’ religiously. ‘I have said that I *counted* these things loss because of Christ. But I can say more than that. I have now had proof of Christ for many years, and I have never seen any cause to think that the comparative estimate I formed of Him, and of all other grounds of hope for eternity, was an untrue one; but abundant confirmation every day of its soundness. As I have counted them loss in the past, then, so I *count* them all loss still.’

And this ‘*for the excellency*’—‘because of the pre-eminence’—‘*of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord*.’ How natural and beautiful the appropriating ‘*my*’ is here! One pictures the apostle lifting his eye to heaven, and pouring out his heart in a word of wondering praise: ‘*Me*—who was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious; who trusted in myself that I was righteous, and despised Thee—Thou, O gracious Saviour, hast Thyself led into that knowledge of Thee which brings with it all holiness and all joy, the knowledge of Thee as *my* Lord.’ ‘This is life eternal,’ said the Redeemer in His High-priestly prayer, ‘that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’ Such knowledge certainly has a ‘glory which excelleth.’

In the words which follow, Paul, still looking back over his spiritual history, seems to gather up the account of his convictions and feelings into the statement of one great decisive act of choice,—the choice made in conversion, and ratified every day

since : ‘*for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,*’ more exactly given thus, ‘*because of whom, or for whose sake, I was subjected to the loss of them all.*’ The reference in the last words is still to his old grounds of religious trust. We might, indeed, understand ‘all things’ in a wider sense at this point ; for an allusion to the fact, which no doubt the Philippians knew, that for Christ he had given up his early friendships and associations, and most brilliant prospects of rising to distinction among his countrymen, would be not at all unnatural, as showing the intensity of his feelings regarding the Saviour. But the course of thought leads us rather to take the more limited reference. The apostle, you observe, keeps still somewhat to the mercantile representation which he has already used ; but ‘loss’ comes in now in a different way. ‘*Feeling what I was wont to deem my gains to be in truth loss, in that they had kept me back from the only Saviour,—hearing God declare that all other trust must be put away by those who would be saved through His Son,—I was constrained by sound calculation to lose all.*’ Sound calculation it was, true wisdom ; as when the captain of a ship of war, in hot pursuit of a prize of the highest value, does not hesitate to lighten his vessel, and thus secure the capture, by casting overboard much that is valuable. For observe how he goes on, ‘*I was constrained to lose all, that I may win Christ.*’ He knew that this one ‘gain’ meant ‘unsearchable riches.’

Mark the object of his desire,—not a doctrine, not a philosophy, not a course of observances, but ‘*Christ*,’—to have Him, the God-man, as his Saviour, Friend, Brother. Our hearts, my brethren, need a *personal* object of religious love and adoration. The cry of the soul from its depths is never, ‘*What have I in heaven?*’ but ‘*Whom have I?*’ We need a personal object of knowledge, so admirable that, the more we know, the more we esteem and venerate,—so amiable that, the more we love, the ampler ever seems the wealth of loveliness,—so enduring, that we can admire and love for ever-

more. This longing finds its answer in Christ. The Infinitely Admirable, the Altogether Lovely, ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,’ presents Himself to all ages and all countries with the gracious invitation, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ To know Him, and dwell with Him, and enjoy rest in His love,—this was the desire of the apostle. ‘To win Christ’ is, in the exquisite language of good old Bishop Hall, ‘to lay fast hold upon Him, to receive Him inwardly into our bosoms, and so to make Him ours, and ourselves His, that we may be joined to Him as our Head, espoused to Him as our Husband, incorporated into Him as our Nourishment, engrafted in Him as our Stock, and laid upon Him as a sure Foundation.’ To ‘win’ such glory and blessedness as is summed up in words like these, and which can be attained only by those who renounce all grounds of confidence for salvation except Christ, is it not most reasonable, my brethren, that a man should cast away everything wherein he trusted? Can he do other than wholly disesteem his old ‘gains,’ ‘counting them but dung, that he may win Christ?’

But it is not easy—it is very hard—for the soul to come to this point. The gate is a strait gate. To part with many worldly possessions or pleasures would be comparatively an easy thing. But in renouncing any thought of merit in connection with the very surrender of all things for Christ, lies the great difficulty. Did men feel that by giving up all things they *earned* salvation, so that they might possess Christ, and also with Him a pride of heart in their own surrender as having deserved Him, the sacrifice would be light. But to cast away all, and yet know that Christ is to us simply and absolutely ‘the gift of God,’—this is felt by the pride of the natural heart to be very hard. But when Christ reveals to us His beauty, the heart yields. When the Divine Spirit shows clearly ‘the treasure hid in the field,’ then the finder, ‘for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that

field.' 'For joy thereof,'—there lies the secret of true self-surrender. Because Jesus loved us, we love Him, and delight to honour Him by singleness of trust and devotion. The freeness of the divine gift is now one great impelling motive to give up all that we may 'win' Him. This sounds as a paradox, but it is true, as many other seeming paradoxes are found in Christian experience to be.

In the 9th verse, the apostle goes on to describe more fully the object of his eager desire. 'I was constrained, by sound judgment, to give up all my old grounds of trust, that I may win Christ, *and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*' From the beginning Paul had believed in his responsibility to God. The Old Scriptures had taught him this; and their voice was distinctly echoed by conscience, as it is to all who do not wilfully deafen themselves. He believed that God was his King and Judge, to whom he owed implicit obedience, and to whom he would have to answer for the use he made of his life, his faculties, his opportunities. He believed that God had given to man His law, Israel possessing it in a very full form through revelation, and even the Gentiles having its outlines 'written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness.' In his early life he had thought that he could keep and did keep this law perfectly. In his heart he said, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' But, by and by, it became clear to him that God's commandment is 'exceeding broad,' reaching vastly farther, and searching vastly deeper, than he had conceived. He had taken into his consideration only the outward life, and even here only the required absence of positive transgression, not the required presence of constant positive activity in God's service. Now he saw that 'God desireth truth in the inward parts'—perfect purity and consecration of the heart, 'out of which are the

issues of life.' It was plain to him that, when God in judgment 'made inquisition' respecting *spiritual* obedience, he had nothing to plead. The supposed '*righteousness of his own, which was of*'—derived from keeping—'*the law*' was a delusion.

But divine mercy offered him salvation in a way which, with sublime completeness, exhibits in one view God's abhorrence of sin, and determination to sustain the dignity of His law, and, at the same time, the infinite richness and tenderness of His love and pity. The Son of God has, as the Representative Man, wrought out, by His holy life and His atoning death, a perfect righteousness; and this God is willing to reckon as if it were the personal righteousness of every one who sincerely believes in His Son. This perfectly and eternally sufficient righteousness is thus enjoyed by men '*through the faith of Christ*.' Or, as the apostle goes on to put it a little more fully, in contrast with the supposed and utterly insufficient righteousness which is '*of the law*', this is '*of God*'—devised and bestowed by Him,—and '*by faith*'—more exactly, '*on, resting on faith*', not in any degree as a meritorious condition, but as a needful antecedent. Those who believe in Christ are regarded by God as '*in Him*'—vitally united to Him; and therefore, though personally unworthy, they are yet safe for eternity, through the all-glorious righteousness of the God-man, their Representative and Head.

The object of the apostle's longing is now clearly before us: '*I suffered loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him*'—'*that whenever and however my relations to God be tested, especially when I am sought for in the great day of final account, I may be found not standing alone, as claiming to be judged by myself, but in Him, and thus sheltered from all danger*'—'*not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*'.

Dear friends, the sketch of Paul's spiritual history which we

have now been studying, ought to have profound interest for every one of us, and to suggest most serious reflections. We are ‘men of like passions’ with him,—equally liable, at the least, to self-deception and self-righteousness. The great day to which he looked forward awaits also you and me. ‘The judgment shall be set, and the books opened.’ Then ‘who shall abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?’ Blessed, surely, are they who have ‘the witness of the Spirit with their spirits’ that, having renounced all vain confidence, they are ‘in Christ,’ and are thus enabled to cherish an intelligent hope that in that day they shall be ‘found in Him, having the righteousness which is of God !’ ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’

## XX.

## THE SAINT'S ASPIRATIONS.

'That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death ;  
11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.'  
—PHIL. iii. 10, 11.

THE connection of these words with the preceding verses is obviously intimate. They exhibit further objects of desire, which the apostle had in view in longing to be 'found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' As were the aspirations of this great Christian, such, in the measure of their faith, are those of all true believers. The subject for our consideration now, then, is the Christian's chief aims.

I do not know that there is any passage of Scripture which, more clearly and strikingly than this, exhibits the peculiarities of vital religion, as contrasted with the views and purposes of man by nature. The transcendentalism, as we may call it, of genuine Christianity—its passing out beyond the range of merely natural thought and desire into a totally new and strange sphere—is here very prominent. Speak to a non-Christian man of any intelligence and elevation of sentiment about the benefit you obtain from Christ's moral teaching, and of your aim, as a Christian, to diminish the crime and wretchedness which abound around us ; and he will understand, and, to some extent, sympathize with you. But say that your aims are to 'know Christ, and the power of His resurrec-

tion, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death,' and that you believe this knowledge to be 'life eternal ;' then worldly wisdom can but stand by and wonder that sane men should thus babble in an unknown tongue. The man who can intelligently and sincerely say things like these has evidently undergone a radical change of mind and heart. It is plain that, while *in* this world, yet in some most important respects he is not *of* it. His own feeling is, that previously he had seen everything in a false and distorting light,—that the highest things had seemed to him but shadows, and only the lowest things real ; as, to one looking down from a hill-side into the mirror of a lake's calm bosom, the world appears inverted, the heaven with its glories below him and unreal, and the earth on which he stands the highest thing of all. Now, lifting his eyes, he sees things as they are,—the heaven above the earth, and as real. Faith brings us out into God's light, and by it we see the proportions and relations of objects truly. Every real Christian is in some degree, the exact degree in which his religion has gained control over him, a *spiritual* man, as distinguished from a carnal or sensual. The highest of his faculties are in exercise,—those by which we are enabled to know and hold fellowship with God. The nobler affections have obtained mastery in him over the lower, making these their servants, their 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.' We pass into this state of mind and heart above nature by the action upon us of a power above nature. Of ourselves, we have no moral energy to step or to stay beyond the sphere of carnality. By nature we revel in it, and cannot indeed conceive of any higher type of life. We become and are kept spiritual by the inworking and indwelling of God's Spirit. 'Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you : if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.'

The spiritual man's aim, then—the aim to which the gracious working of the Holy Ghost impels—is '*to know Christ.*' This

may be regarded as the sum of the believer's aims, of which the other statements that follow but present special aspects.

The Apostle Paul was a man of extraordinary abilities, and evidently also a devoted student. His temperament was such as to lead him to interest himself in knowledge of every kind ; and probably no line of intellectual research followed by any in his day was altogether strange to him. Now in the earlier part of this paragraph we have the judgment to which the Divine Spirit guided him, as to the most important department of knowledge. Such, he says, is 'the excellency'—the pre-eminence—'of the knowledge of Christ,' that, in comparison with it, all other knowledge, and indeed everything else in the world, is to be regarded as worth nothing. Everything else, in so far as it keeps a man back from this, is to be regarded as a positive 'loss.' However interesting or useful any knowledge may be, looked at by itself, yet here it 'has no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth.' These little lights fade away from view, like the stars at the advent of the sun. Real knowledge of all kinds is, when wisely used, good and profitable to men ; real knowledge of all kinds may be tributary, too, in a high degree, to our advancement in this knowledge : but, stating the case in the simplest and barest form, to know everything else and not to know Christ brings infinite loss ; whilst to know Christ, even if nothing else be known, brings infinite gain, for he who knows Christ knows the great secret, the secret of the chief good. He has found the 'pearl of great price,' and 'to sell all that he hath, and buy it,' is true wisdom.

That knowledge of Christ of which the apostle here speaks as his aim is, I need hardly say, distinct from knowledge about Christ—distinguished as a whole from its part, as a temple from its foundation. As there can be no temple without a foundation, but may easily be a foundation on which no temple is reared ; so we cannot know Christ without knowing the truth about Him. But it is possible—alas, one cannot but fear that it is sadly common—to know much truth about Christ, and yet

not to know Him as Paul did and strove to do always more perfectly. Saving knowledge of Christ has heat as well as light. It fills and influences the whole soul,—not the mind only, but the affections. ‘The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my Lord*,’—there you have its nature set forth. It is essentially appropriating. ‘To know Jesus as *mine*, my Saviour, my Elder Brother, my Prophet, Priest, and King; whose promises are bread of life to me; whose laws are of absolute and sweet obligation to me; whose grace is my constant trust,’—this is what Paul means.

Such knowledge brings with it moral excellence; because to Him whom thus we know we grow like in character, through the transforming power of love. ‘Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.’ It brings with it happiness too; for, knowing the excellences of his Saviour—holding communion by faith with a Friend infinitely faithful, and wise, and powerful, who says to him, ‘I will strengthen thee, I will help thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness’—it cannot but be that the believer will ‘rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.’

It is reasonable, then,—and, as a matter of fact, it belongs to the essence of vital religion,—that the great aim of the disciple of Christ should be ‘to know Him’ experimentally and growingly. Saving faith is simply spiritual knowledge of Christ. ‘By His knowledge,’ says Jehovah—that is, ‘by the knowledge of Himself’—‘shall My righteous Servant justify many.’ One element in the new state of spirit produced by the beginning of this knowledge, in the cordial belief of the gospel, is always strong longing to know more of Him, to have ever fuller experimental acquaintance with His character. And as the glory of that character ‘passeth knowledge,’ the joyous study of the saints throughout eternity will still be ‘to know Christ.’

Proceeding to describe his aim somewhat more in detail, the apostle speaks of his longing ‘*to know the power of Christ’s*

*resurrection.'* It is plain from the connection in which these last words occur, that they do not mean what, taken by themselves, they might mean, 'the divine power *shown in* the Saviour's resurrection,'—as we read in the Epistle to the Ephesians of 'the working of God's mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead' (Eph. i. 19, 20). The reference here is plainly to the 'power *exerted by* Christ's resurrection,' or, as the older English versions have it, 'the virtue of His resurrection.' This 'virtue' or 'power' is manifold, present and future. According to the apostle's line of thought, however, his reference must be supposed to be to what is experienced in the present life. Now we read that, as Christ 'was delivered for our offences,' so He 'was raised again for our justification' (Rom. iv. 25). In His resurrection the divine seal was attached to the charter of grace, attesting the completeness of the great work of mediation. The risen and glorified Saviour still discharges needful functions as our High Priest, too, presenting the blood of atonement in the Most Holy Place, and interceding for His people. When God forgives our sins, and accepts us as righteous, then we experience as really the power of the Saviour's resurrection as the power of His death. Justification, however, was spoken of by the apostle in the preceding verse, whereas we appear to be here at a further stage, amid the spiritual aims and efforts of the Christian life, the life of a man already justified. Paul's thought, I doubt not, in 'knowing the power of His resurrection,' is personal experience, through growing holiness and consequent happiness, of the fulfilment of the Saviour's gracious declaration, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

When Jesus rose, and ascended to sit down at His Father's right hand, He 'received gifts for men,' and 'all power over all flesh, to quicken—give life to—whom He would.' This life of holy blessedness which He bestows is kindred to His own,—nay, it is in truth the life of the Head stirring in the members. 'We live,—yet not we, but Christ liveth in us.'

The power of Christ's resurrection is to give resurrection to the spirits of His chosen now, as well as to their bodies by and by. To the eye of faith, how vivid a picture, or rather, how dark and gloomy a shadow, is a dead body of a dead soul,—a soul which in the midst of a world where myriads of agencies are appealing to us from every side on behalf of God, to contemplate Him, to learn His will, to pray for His help, yet sees not, hears not, breathes not,—a soul which is utterly insensible alike to the tender touch of divine love, and the stern stroke of divine anger,—a soul 'dead in trespasses and sins!' Very varied is the aspect of the spiritually dead. Sometimes we see moral corruption so gross, and manifest, and repulsive, that we hurry away from the loathsome sight; sometimes, on the other hand, such a sweet tenderness and lovingness of nature, such a fulness of generous impulses and manly energies, that one finds it all but impossible to believe that aspiration after God's glory, the only breath of true life, can be wanting there.

' He who hath bent him o'er the dead,  
 Ere the first day of death is fled,  
 Before decay's effacing fingers  
 Have swept the lines where beauty lingers ;  
 And marked the mild angelic air,  
 The rapture of repose that's there,—  
 The fixed, yet tender traits that streak  
 The languor of the placid cheek ;  
 . . . .  
 Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,  
 He still might doubt the tyrant's power,—  
 So fair, so calm, so softly-sealed,  
 The first—last—look, by death revealed.'

Yet this *is* death, no less really than where the sad ravages of corruption are obvious to the senses. So is it with the soul. Wherever love to God is not the ruling motive of action, there is death; and life can be seen there only through a resurrection. Blessed be the Prince of Life, dear friends, who is willing to quicken us into 'newness of life' with Himself!

By an earthquake, it may be—a shaking of the nature—a convulsion of the whole man—the ‘great stone’ of prejudice, of careless unconcern and carnal security, with which depravity has closed the door of our sepulchre, and which the world and the world’s prince have sealed with their signet, is rolled away ; the heavenly light of conviction ‘of sin, and righteousness, and judgment,’ pierces the darkness of the tomb ; Jesus cries with a loud voice, ‘Come forth ;’ and he who was dead comes forth, bound hand and foot, indeed, with grave-clothes, yet alive, through the quickening energies of the Spirit of Christ, who has already taken up His abode within him. Such is the soul’s resurrection. A life has begun which, by the terms of the covenant, can never end,—the life which is sustained by spiritually ‘eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man.’ The soul of the regenerate man enjoys peace with God, and his desires and efforts are directed towards likeness of character to God. This is real life. As yet, however, the spiritual resurrection is imperfect, for ‘the law of sin in the members wars with the law of the mind.’ But the energy of the life already received is seen in such strong longings as the apostle breathes out here for more complete fellowship in the spirit of life with Him who said, ‘I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father.’ We long, if we be Christians, to have all our faculties exercised to discern and to accomplish whatever may redound to the glory of our Creator and Redeemer ; to give up to His service, in the sphere in which He has placed us, our wealth, our talents, our time, our influence ; to have our whole life, in all its relations, pervaded by religion. To advance towards this attainment is to experience ever more fully ‘the power of Christ’s resurrection,’ by having fellowship with Him in His life.

Further, the apostle longs ‘*to know the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.*’ The rendering ‘*being made conformable*’ has scarcely that exquisite felicity which usually characterizes our wonderful translation.

The particular word here found in the original does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament ; but a closely-allied form does twice,—in the 29th verse of the 8th chapter of Romans, where it is translated ‘conformed,’ and in the 21st verse of this present chapter, where the rendering is ‘fashioned like unto.’ Either of these is decidedly preferable for exactness to ‘made conformable.’

It is not easy to determine with precision the idea intended in this part of the verse,—the condensation of the language in ‘fashioned like unto His death’ rendering it obscure. The construction of the original, however, shows this at least distinctly, that the ‘knowing the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings,’ and the ‘being fashioned like unto His death,’ stand in the closest connection with each other—the latter seemingly being almost equivalent to the former, only that the thought is expressed with more intensity. On the whole, I think that the longing of the apostle set forth here is somewhat to this effect,—that he may be cast in that Christ-like mould of feeling and character with which, through its antagonism to the wickedness of the world, suffering is necessarily connected—that character, the natural result of the exhibition of which, in its perfect beauty in the midst of sinners, was their murder of God’s Holy One. For suffering, looked at simply by itself, the apostle does not long. Such aspirings belong to the spirit of pure fanaticism and folly. But he longs for the character of which, in this world, sufferings are an inseparable adjunct,—ay, and the sufferings themselves, in so far as they evince the growing possession of this character, he will welcome with thankfulness,—a martyr’s death itself, if God so appoint.

Now here, you see, brethren, we have one of those paradoxes, or apparent self-contradictions, which meet us everywhere in religion. We have just had the believer’s yearning for fellowship of *life* with Christ ; and now we have substantially the same yearning thrown into the form of a desire for fellowship in *suffering and death*. But you see how it is. The

Christian, brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, was, as he presented himself to us in the former clause, looking out into the light ; and we saw a full, free, direct out-throwing of the heart's desire to go forward, ever forward, into the light. Now he turns and faces the darkness ; and we have the thought moulded by the sight of the darkness. The paradoxes in religion are caused by its having to do with facts so unnatural—so directly opposed to the nature of things as constituted by God at the first—as wickedness and misery. Sin is the great anomaly in God's world, my brethren. It might well seem an utter self-contradiction, a violation of all law and order, that the Prince of Life—the possessor of a life independent and essential, from whom all life springs, through whom and in whom all life subsists—should die ; yet this was, in truth, the highest act of the highest divine law of love, for the restoration in the moral universe of the order which had been overthrown by sin. The true paradox, the true lawlessness, was that man, made to live, should wilfully have died,—should wilfully have chosen the defilement of sin, and the curse of the grave. The Prince of Life died that, in accordance with law and order, He might give life to dead men. Now, according to the eternal covenant of love, Christ's people are so indissolubly united to Him, that we died with Him, and rose with Him,—and this in regard to both the grand elements of salvation, deliverance from the guilt and curse of sin, and deliverance from its power. As regards deliverance from guilt,—when 'Jesus was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,' we so died in Him, in the sight of God, that the law has no longer any claim upon us for punishment ; and we so rose in Him, as to pass out into the sphere of full blessed acceptance with God, and adoption into His family. As regards sanctification,—we live through the fellowship of Christ's life ; and yet at the same time, being in a wicked world, we have 'a fellowship of His sufferings, being fashioned after the likeness of His death.' It is plain from many passages in the Apostle Paul's writings, that

this was a conjunction of thought in which he took great delight. He ‘always bore about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his body.’

One element of the Saviour’s sufferings in which all true believers have fellowship with Him, was *pain caused by the sight of abounding sin*. When you remember the genuineness of the Lord’s humanity, and the consequent reality of His impressibleness by His surroundings, you will see how pungent a source of distress this must have been to Him. Ah, brethren, for a holy soul, a soul that throbbed with an unceasing and absolute devotion to the divine will, to live for three-and-thirty years in the midst of a world like this, and in close intercourse with its people,—a world where blasphemy, and impurity, and falsehood, and cruelty, walk abroad unblushingly, and obtrude themselves on every eye and ear,—what a vast sum of anguish there was here for the Lord ! Apart altogether from the direct hostility of men to Himself, and from those mysterious agonies caused by the hiding from Him of His Father’s countenance,—the Man Christ Jesus, simply because He was situated among sinful men, could not but be ‘a Man of sorrows.’ Now all His people have fellowship with Him in this suffering. If a man have no experience of the kind, no loathing at the sight of sin, no distress at the thought of the dishonour done to God, and the misery brought upon themselves, by the wickedness of the wicked, then certainly he is not a Christian. Every true believer knows something of the experience of the Psalmist,—‘Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.’ Contentment with a sinful world belongs to the spirit of Satan, not of Christ. To be so brought out into the light of God, then, and so pervaded by its glorious radiance, that the sight of moral darkness shall cause ever intenser distress,—this is the believer’s longing and aim.

This pain in Christians has a side—the saddest side—of

which Jesus could know nothing. We, His people, loathe *our own* sins, and pray that we may loathe them more. Our life with Christ is maintained by dying daily to sin, by painful struggle, through the energies of the Divine Spirit within us, against the power of remaining depravity. Though Jesus had no sin, yet in pain at the sight of the evil in our own hearts and lives we have true fellowship with Him ; for the spring of the hatred is that reverence and love to God which reigned in Him.

But the sufferings of Christ included also *direct inflictions through the hatred of the wicked*. The opposition of the Lord to sin was so direct and complete, that all who loved sin could not but hate Him. Those who lived in the darkness, and loved the darkness rather than the light, shrank from and abhorred that glory of heavenly light in the Saviour's character which revealed the intensity of their own darkness ; and it was but natural that by the children of darkness the incarnate Light should be crucified. Now, as He was, Christian brethren—hated by the world—so are we, in the measure in which we too are children of light. 'If we were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because we are not of the world, but Christ hath chosen us out of the world, therefore the world hateth us.' Remember the word which He said unto us, 'The servant is not greater than his Lord : if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.' From the nature of things, it must be so. The contrast between sin and genuine holiness is far too decided and prominent a thing,—it bears at every turn far too strongly and piercingly on matters in which the heart is most interested,—to be treated, in the intercourse of men, as a thing of indifference. The stake, and the scaffold, and the thumbscrew, torture and death for religion, are eminently natural results of the meeting of two forces as mutually repugnant as fire and water. And though, in God's kind providence, and through the indirect working of Christianity, the world does not burn nor

crucify for religion in this our age and country, yet it hates Christianity and Christians just as really as of old. Moral light and moral darkness, moral life and moral death, cannot co-exist in mutual love. If any professing Christian among us, then, has no sense of this opposition—an opposition subtle, it may be, but real and strong,—if he feels himself quite at home, an honoured and thoroughly welcome friend, in the circles of those who are unmistakeably mere children of this world,—he has very great reason to fear that the darkness has thus lovingly received the professed light of the world, simply because there is no light in him. The *profession* of Christianity may be respectable in the eyes of the world, but a really Christian life the world hates. The truth stands all down the ages, till the consummation of the probationary history of our earth, that ‘the friendship of this world is enmity with God.

Such, then, I apprehend, brethren, is the meaning of the apostle’s statement that he aspires to ‘know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.’ His longing is, that he may sorrow over the existence of sin as the Saviour did; and that his opposition to sin may be so clear and sharp as to bring down the world’s hatred, as the Saviour’s was and did. This is to be ‘conformed to Christ’s death.’

The Christian life, then, you see, must be a life of seriousness. It is a happy life—the only happy life—because it is life with and in Him who, having risen triumphant from the grave, was ‘anointed with the oil of gladness.’ But God and sin, heaven and hell, are realities far too solemn to permit it to be a life of frivolous gladness. And the happiness of those who have fellowship of life with Christ, is none the less deep and broad and lasting, because they have fellowship also in His sufferings, and their life is, in considerable measure, ‘conformed to His death.’

In the 11th verse, the apostle sets forth the object of hope,

with a view to which it was that he resolutely and prayerfully strove to ‘know Christ’ ever more fully, ‘and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed unto His death?’ ‘*if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*’ ‘*Resurrection of the dead*’ is in itself a phrase expressive of the destiny of all men, believers and unbelievers alike; for, as Paul testified before Felix, ‘the unjust’ as well as ‘the just’ shall rise again (Acts xxiv. 15). In such a passage as the present, however, expressive of Christian aims and aspirations, the general term is very naturally employed with the special force of ‘resurrection and glorious life with Christ.’ This special application occurs often in the New Testament,—as, for example, in our Lord’s contrast between ‘the children of this world’ and those ‘who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead’ (Luke xx. 34, 35). In the apostle’s hopes this word gathered up all that his soul longed for,—perfect freedom for ever from sin and sorrow; knowledge of Christ up to the fullest measure of his capacities of knowledge; perfect experimental acquaintance with the power of His resurrection, through perfect fellowship of life with Him; the ineffable and everlasting blessedness of being with Him and like Him, ‘sitting with Him in His throne, even as He hath sat down with His Father in His throne.’ This is the glory of ‘the children of the resurrection.’

‘*If by any means*’ is expressive of intense desire,—and at the same time here of the profoundest humility and sense of unworthiness to attain the object of desire. In so far as a certain degree of doubt appears to enter into the meaning of the phrase, we may feel some little surprise. At first sight this may seem to conflict with the sublime confidence which has shown itself in the first chapter, in ‘To me to die is gain,’ and which we meet also ever and anon in the other Epistles,—for example, in ‘Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of

righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' 'But,' says the eminently wise and holy Neander, 'these are discrepancies which belong to the essence of Christian life. When the Christian looks to his Redeemer,—to the grace of redemption assured to him,—to the unchangeable word of promise,—the end to which all his struggles are directed appears to him as an object of undoubted certainty. On the other hand, when he examines his life by the standard of divine holiness, his confidence finds no firm foundation, defects and defilement everywhere presenting themselves to his view,—and all this, the more he has really advanced in holiness, for thus his spiritual insight has become keener, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to apprehend the ideal pattern of divine holiness, in its application to the duties of his life—to test, by reference to this, his inner and outward life—and to prove its nakedness and shortcomings. Hence the fluctuation in Paul's expressions.' You remember the language employed by the apostle in writing to the Corinthians: 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway' (1 Cor. ix. 27). In its suggestion of a measure of doubt, this is somewhat similar to his words in the verse now before us,—but much stronger and more startling.

Dear brethren, let us hear a most important lesson read to us in the employment of such language regarding himself by so illustrious a servant of Christ. We all find in ourselves a proneness at times, through the deceitfulness of the heart, to self-complacency and listlessness in religion. Paul endeavoured habitually to feel himself engaged in a life struggle—called on to 'work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.' But while cherishing this state of mind—and because he cherished this state of mind, for here again one of the paradoxes of the Christian life presents itself—he had much joyful assurance of salvation. Only those who keep vividly before them the

spiritual hazards connected with life in this world, and who, full of self-distrust, are vigilant, prayerful, and strenuous in effort after holiness, are likely to have brightness of hope. The 'if by any means I may attain,' and 'henceforth there is laid up for me,' are bound closely together.

## XXI.

## PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK.

‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do,—forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’—PHIL. iii. 12-14.

AT this point the apostle suddenly turns aside, to give a caution against most serious error. In opposition to the soul-destroying formalism and self-righteousness of the Judaizing preachers, he has enjoined on the Philippians to ‘glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;’ and in support of his injunction has reminded them how he himself, having in unusual measure those grounds of confidence in which the misleading teachers believed, had renounced all of these, ‘that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ.’ Now there was a hazard that recoil from formalism might be into moral indifference and indolence, the precious truth that believers are ‘complete in Christ’ being turned by the wicked ingenuity of the carnal heart into an instrument of religious sloth. Nay, it might be made even a direct incitement to sin; and there were, in fact, in apostolic times, as probably in all ages of the church since, persons who thus abused the doctrines of grace to their own destruction, saying, ‘Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound.’ Into

such blasphemous antinomianism it was at least as likely that some of the Philippians might be led away as into Jewish formalism,—situated as they were in the midst of the moral abominations of heathenism. Against this danger, then, Paul now—in the paragraph extending from the 12th verse to the 1st verse of the next chapter—affectionately and earnestly warns them; beginning in the way which the sketch of his spiritual history given in the previous section naturally suggested, by an account of his own convictions respecting the importance of a holy character, and his efforts springing from these convictions. The course of thought passes easily from the statement of his longings and aims as a Christian, given in the 10th and 11th verses, to the description of struggle, ‘following after, pressing toward the mark,’ which we have here.

The word ‘*apprehend*,’ as used in these verses, has its original meaning, ‘to lay hold of with the hand,’—a sense scarcely retained by us in modern English, except in regard to a constable who ‘apprehends’ an evil-doer. ‘*Attained*,’ in the beginning of the 12th verse, is not a very happy rendering, because it suggests a reference to the ‘attain’ of the previous verse, whilst in the original these are two quite distinct words; and because it hides the real connection with the ‘apprehends’ which follow, the original word being merely a simpler form of that translated ‘apprehend,’ and almost identical in meaning. Of ‘*but this one thing I do*,’ you will see, from the italics in your Bibles, that the original has only ‘but one thing,’—this ‘one thing’ being evidently contrasted with the foolish and arrogant statements regarding attained perfection, which some made about themselves, but which Paul could not make. From the connection of thought, the mind instinctively supplies ‘I do,’ ‘I know,’ ‘I can say of myself,’ or the like. The clause, as found in our version, is often quoted as exhibiting the need of concentration—of a ‘united heart’—for success in the struggles of the Christian life. This perhaps lays a stress on the ‘*one thing*’ which it was hardly intended to bear; but the truth is

directly and most vividly suggested by the whole of the apostle's statement here.

Throughout the passage, the apostle has before his mind his favourite image for the illustration of the efforts of the Christian life, a race run for a prize,—one of those races, for example, which formed part of the famous Olympic and Isthmian games.

Paraphrased a little, the statement in these verses is as follows : 'I have told you, brethren, that, at the great turning-point of my life, I was led by the gracious Spirit to give up all my old grounds of trust, that I might win Christ, and be found in Him. But one act is not the whole of Christianity. Acceptance of Christ by faith is the starting-point of a new life. Do not misunderstand what I have said to you, therefore, by supposing me to think either that in my decisive act of self-renunciation for Christ I laid hold of the goal of my appointed race, and was thus ready at once to receive the prize, or that since then I have been spiritually perfected. It is not so ; but I press on, if that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus, on the day of marvellous grace when He appeared to me on my journey to Damascus. Brethren, there are some who seem to think of themselves that they have laid hold of the goal already ; but I assuredly do not count myself to have done this. One thing, however, I do ; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize which belongs to the heavenly calling wherewith God calls us in Christ Jesus.'

The first general truth set forth in this passage is, that *the holiness of a Christian is imperfect so long as he is on earth.* You and I, brethren, know ourselves to be very far from having reached entire conformity in heart and life to the will of our heavenly Father. Others, perhaps, may not see very marked defects in us ; we may be habitually characterized by purity, sobriety, uprightness, patience, and benevolence ; we

may be diligent in availing ourselves of the public and private means of grace ; we may be actively engaged in efforts to extend the Redeemer's kingdom ; we may hear at times with cheering distinctness 'the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are children of God ;'—yet, trying ourselves by the standard which God has given us in the character of His Son, we find every day abundant cause to acknowledge sin. Sometimes candid self-examination makes us almost despond. In such moods, the testimony of Paul in the passage before us is fitted to comfort, by giving us the assurance that even the most illustrious servants of Christ have had similar consciousness of imperfection. Studying the apostle's life, we see so bright and steady a glow of holy zeal, and mark everywhere a spirit so pure, and generous, and self-sacrificing, and patient, that it hardly occurs to us to class him among the sinning and struggling believers to whom we know ourselves to belong. But here you have his own witness,—after the greater part of his noble life was spent,—after he had become the spiritual father of many churches,—after he had written some, probably most, of those Epistles which display such sublime spiritual wisdom,—after the signal expression of the divine favour to him in his rapture to Paradise had been for many years a memory, —‘I am not yet perfect ; I count not myself to have laid hold of the goal.’

You remember also that detailed and most pathetic statement made by him in Romans : ‘I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body

of this death?' (Rom. vii. 18, 19, 21-24.) The language employed by Paul in these verses, and also in other parts of that section of the Epistle to the Romans from which they are taken, is so strong in the confession of imperfection, that many expositors have regarded the passage as descriptive, not of his experiences as a Christian, but of the struggles, in the days before his enlightenment, between natural conscience and corrupt inclination. The great preponderance of opinion, however, among evangelical students of the Epistle, has been in favour of the view that his experience as a believer is that exhibited,—most justly, as it seems to me, whether we examine the passage itself, or its connection with the context. 'Delight in the law of God after the inward man' could never be ascribed to the unregenerate; whilst every word of the confessions is echoed by the most spiritually-minded of God's children.

It is true that sometimes, amid the glow of first love, a young Christian feels as if violation of the law of God were henceforth an impossibility for him. While the words of gracious welcome are still ringing in the ear of the returned prodigal, and the kiss of love still warm on his lips, he cannot but think that nothing will ever lead him to disobey, or even for a moment forget, so good a Father. But he soon finds that 'the law of sin in the members brings him into captivity.' He discovers that, as the fulness of the bliss which belongs to the salvation given him in Christ is reserved for heaven, so is it also with the perfect holiness. Lazarus, though alive by the grace and power of the Son of God, feels his limbs encumbered with the grave-clothes. Says good John Newton, when a well-tried soldier of Jesus Christ, 'I would not be the sport of vain imaginations; but this evil is present with me. My heart is like a highway, like a city without walls or gates. I sometimes compare my *words* to the treble of an instrument, which my *thoughts* accompany with a kind of bass, or rather anti-bass, in which every rule of harmony is broken, every possible combination of discord and confusion is introduced, utterly incon-

sistent with, and contradictory to, the intended melody. Ah, what music would my praying and my preaching often make in the ears of the Lord of Hosts, if He listened to them as they are mine only! I would not be influenced by a principle of self on any occasion ; yet this evil I often do. I see the baseness and absurdity of such conduct as clearly as I see the light of the day. But the Lord knows how this dead fly taints and spoils my best services, and makes them no better than specious sins. I would not cleave to a covenant of works ; yet even this I do. It is the main pleasure and business of my life to set forth the necessity and all-sufficiency of the Mediator between God and men, and to make mention of His righteousness, even of His only. But here, as in everything else, I find a vast difference between my judgment and my experience. I am invited to take the water of life *freely*,—yet often discouraged because I have nothing wherewith to pay for it. Ah, how vile must the heart be that can hold a parley with such abominations, when I so well know their nature and their tendency! Surely he who finds himself capable of this, may without the least affectation of humility (however fair his outward conduct appears) subscribe himself less than the least of all saints, and of sinners the very chief.<sup>1</sup>

I believe, my brethren, that all Christians, in the measure of their true self-knowledge, will recognise, in this autobiographical sketch of Newton's spiritual condition, something very like a sketch of their own. The position that Christian perfection can be, and not unfrequently has been, attained on earth, has indeed been held by some ; but whenever the theory, as entertained by men of evangelical faith and saintly character, is carefully examined, the difference between them and evangelical believers generally, resolves itself always into one of little more than words. It becomes plain that by 'perfection' they mean simply maturity of Christian character, not entire freedom from defect.

<sup>1</sup> *Cardiphonia*,—Fifth Letter to a Nobleman.

As has been already said, one practical result of reflection on this subject should be to sustain Christians, when tending to doubt the reality of their faith on the ground that it does not produce in them all the spiritual fruits they desire. We cannot be too deeply humbled on account of the many proofs we daily see that sin dwells in us ; but we must not give up our hope that we are among the ‘sanctified in Christ Jesus,’ simply because we are not better than the Apostle Paul.

In seeking comfort here, however, it is of essential moment that, in closest connection with the doctrine of Christian imperfection in the present state, we look also at the other great general truth exhibited in the verses before us. This is, that *vital religion impels to ardent longing and persistent effort after progress in holiness.*

‘Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’ It is plain, as a matter of fact, that men are not freed ‘from *all* iniquity’ at the moment of conversion. Consideration of the divine character, then, will lead any thoughtful person to expect that all God’s dealings with His people will be of the nature of moral discipline, and that the Christian life will be one of progress in spiritual energy and beauty—in freedom from the bondage of depraved inclinations, in the strength of holy affections, in singleness of devotion to the divine will. Such is the representation constantly given in Scripture of the life of the child of God. ‘The way of the wicked is as darkness ; but the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ As regards the power of the gospel, when received by faith, to gain commanding influence over the nature, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.’ From the nature of the great saving change which is effected by the Spirit of God through the faith of the truth, new desires are awakened

in the soul, the tendency of which, as God gratifies them, and the sweetness of the blessing He bestows is felt, is to grow constantly stronger. Now fellowship with God, and likeness to God, which are the objects of these desires, are inexhaustible sources of blessedness. Thus progress is the law of the new life.

But the mode of this progress does no violence to any of the elements of our moral nature. God works out His gracious purpose, not through some physical impulse, under which we are altogether passive, but through the renewal of our wills. Exposed, then, as the Christian is while here, with a heart but partially sanctified, to the abundant temptations of the world, and to the influence of our great spiritual foe, it is plain that progress will not be without effort and struggle on our part. The duty of diligence and persistence in such effort is everywhere most affectionately and earnestly set before us in the word of God. In such injunctions the bodily exertions of warfare and of races are often referred to by way of illustration. Thus we are called on, as you remember, to ‘fight the good fight of faith,’ ‘taking to us the whole armour of God, and standing in the evil day;’ and to ‘lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us.’ In the present passage, as has been already mentioned, the image of the race is made use of; and by two or three bold lines the picture of one of the great competitions which gathered crowds of spectators from all parts of the world, and success in which was prized as one of the highest honours attainable by a Greek, is with much liveliness set before us. Dense all around the course is a vast multitude of interested faces, ‘a great cloud of witnesses.’ Near the starting-point, which is also the goal, sits the judge, with a garland of olive leaves in his hand —the prize of victory. The competitors are already round the distance-post, and have the goal before them. Of the ground already passed over you see that they have no thought.

Their keen attitude, with the upper part of the body thrown forward—‘*reaching forth*,’ as if eager even to anticipate the swift limbs—shows that every energy of will and frame is concentrated on the effort to lay hold of the goal. Such is the scene.

The *aim* of spiritual progress, the ‘*mark*’ or goal of the race, is *perfection*. ‘Not as though I were already *perfect*,’ says the apostle. No Christian can accept anything lower than this as his aim. The new man in Christ feels instinctively that, when God gave His Son to save men from sin, the salvation was to be *perfect*,—that His ‘*exceeding great and precious promises*’ have been granted to us to the intent ‘that by these we might be *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,’—that therefore the thought of contentment with conformity merely to what the world deems a fair standard of morality, is a glaring insult to Him. If we are true believers, my brethren, our aim, from the impulses of the divine life within us, cannot but be to be ‘*perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*.’

Perfection, in the absolute sense of the word, can be ascribed to God alone; in whom infinite capabilities of holiness are exercised with infinite completeness. Throughout eternity, the knowledge and the powers of angels and redeemed men will be growing; and with the growth of capability for the service of God will be the actual increase of such service. Thus for ever the moral creatures of God in glory will be ‘*pressing toward the mark*,’ ‘*reaching forth unto those things which are before*.’ In a lower sense of ‘*perfection*,’ however—as relative to our faculties and capacities—‘*the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness*.’ This relative perfection, though, as a matter of fact, not reached till death, is evidently the goal before the apostle’s mind, in speaking of the persistent spiritual efforts of his life,—perfect conformity in everything to the will of God, to the image of Christ. The

child of God longs to have everything that defileth removed from his heart and life, and to have everything present in his heart and life which will ‘adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour.’ This is the character which he keeps steadily before him, and towards which he makes advances. In the measure of the intelligence and liveliness of his faith, he endeavours to live a Christlike life; and, though falling very far short of his ideal, yet he does, on the whole, succeed in employing all the departments and doings of his life, the secular as well as the strictly religious, as instruments for helping him to become always more Christlike. ‘Infinite as are the varieties of life, so manifold are the paths to saintly character; and he who has not found out how, directly or indirectly, to make everything converge towards his soul’s sanctification, has as yet missed the meaning of this life.’<sup>1</sup>

The spirit which secures progress is one of willingness to ‘forget the things which are behind,’ and thus have the way clear for the desires and energies freely to ‘reach forth unto those things which are before.’ It is true that the remembrance of our past life has great moral uses. The remembrance of sins is fitted to humble,—of mistakes, to suggest wiser courses,—of mercies, to encourage. But, with weak hearts like ours, the influence of memory is often perverse. As we recall past failures, we tend to despondency; whilst the remembrance of past seasons of spiritual happiness, or of activity in the service of the Lord, may be made to minister most unsound comfort in times of backsliding. In so far as ‘things which are behind’ exert over us, in any degree, power in such directions, it is well—it is needful, if our souls are to ‘prosper and be in health’—that we ‘forget those things.’ The latter of the two tendencies which I have mentioned is evidently most prominent before the apostle’s mind,—the tendency to find satisfaction in remembering how vigorously in some former days we rowed against the current of worldly influence, while

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Robertson, of Brighton.

now we are but indolently dipping the oars, and therefore drifting down the stream. The counsel of heavenly wisdom is, ‘Bear ever in mind that the current against you is strong and constant, so that to relax effort is to go downward. If you rest at the oar to muse complacently on what you have gained, you are meantime rapidly losing all the gain. Strenuously and perseveringly, then, bend to the oar; and count nothing gained till all be gained.’ Such, the apostle tells us here, was his habitual feeling and practice. He put out of his view the past spiritual struggles of his life, from so many of which he had come out ‘more than conqueror through Him that loved him,’ and by which the powers of his great soul had been brought into sweet ‘captivity to the obedience of Christ.’ These struggles and victories are all behind him now; and his one thought is of progress.

Paul felt that God had given him most powerful *motives*, thus to seek spiritual advancement with singleness of aim. One of these was found in his knowledge of the purpose which Jesus had in view, in His gracious dealings towards him. It was most reasonable that he should ‘follow after, if that he might apprehend *that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus.*’ The grace of that never-to-be-forgotten day, when the Saviour’s hand arrested him in his course of madness and sin,—the grace of the sublime self-sacrifice of Bethlehem and Calvary, by which He had prepared the way for that wondrous arrestment,—to what end was it? Jesus ‘gave Himself’ for you and me, brethren, and now gives us His Spirit, and compasses us with the influences of His tender mercy,—for what? Certainly, dear friends, no power over the heart, constraining to holy obedience, can be conceived, equal to the simple knowledge that the object of Christ’s loving-kindness is ‘to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’

With the power of gratitude the force of holy ambition joins itself, to impel to earnest, persistent effort in the Christian race.

Before the believer's eye is set '*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*' This prize is '*the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him;*'—the perfect holy blessedness of heaven. Every follower of Christ feels the animating influence of this hope. When at times the heart grows weary in the spiritual struggle, a glimpse through faith of the '*diadem of beauty*' revives the flagging energies. The changes and sorrows of the pilgrim life can be patiently borne by those who are enabled with full confidence to '*look for a city which hath foundations.*' When divine grace gives wisdom to '*have respect unto the recompense of the reward,*' '*the reproach of Christ*' will be esteemed '*greater riches than the treasures*' of the world. The human soul of the Lord Jesus Himself was strengthened to bear the weight of atoning suffering by the contemplation of the blessedness to come. '*For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame.*' In the passage before us the apostle does not describe, but vividly suggests, the immeasurable preciousness of the '*prize*' which divine grace offers, for Jesus' sake, to those who '*endure unto the end.*' It is '*the prize of—connected with, belonging to—the high calling of God.*' The glorious origin of the operations and influences by which Christians have been brought into their position and character, leads up to the thought of a transcendent grandeur of destiny. Our calling is in every point of view a '*high*' or '*heavenly calling.*'<sup>1</sup> The invitation and gracious influences are from heaven; and by them God '*calls us unto His kingdom and glory*' (1 Thess. ii. 12).

You will observe great encouragement for the struggling believer in the language here employed. When he feels most deeply his own impotence, and when, in the light of the glory of the promised reward, he sees most clearly his unworthiness,—how cheering to remember that he has not entered on the race unsummoned! The '*calling*' by God implies a

<sup>1</sup> Compare Heb. iii. 1.

promise of all needed guidance and help ; and with His aid ‘all things are possible.’ This calling is ‘*in Christ Jesus*,’ too, in whom all God’s words and ways to us are full of mercy. In their connection here, these words sound like the voice of Jesus Himself, saying to His people, in the midst of their wrestling and fear, ‘ Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.’

Let us lay the teaching of this passage of Scripture to heart, my brethren. Progress is of the essence of vital religion, and is indeed the grand and only satisfying evidence of vitality. But true believers not unfrequently feel, through certain results of real progress, as if they were not making progress. With the increase of spirituality comes a constantly distincter apprehension of the glorious completeness and beauty of the standard of Christian holiness, in the character of the Lord Jesus ; and thus, constantly, also, a more vivid sense of the believer’s own shortcomings. The growing light reveals more painfully to the heart—which is becoming ever more sensitive—the depth of darkness still remaining in the corners and crannies of the nature and life. Candid questioning of the soul respecting the existence of a sincere *longing* for progress, will show how the matter really stands with us. There can be no strong and persistent yearning for advance in likeness to the Master, except in true believers. And wherever such longings are found, that Christian is making actual progress, whether he himself can clearly see it or not. It is very likely that those of his fellow-Christians who have opportunities of observing him closely, see satisfying proof of his advance.

In no believer, probably, is increase of wisdom and devotedness altogether equable ; but this affords no ground for doubting that progress is the law of spiritual life, and that this progress must at some intervals, longer or shorter, become visible,—any more than the seeming reflux, for a few moments, of a flowing tide, gives reason to doubt that, on the whole, the sea will gain on the land till the time of high water. No man has a right to conclude that his neighbour is not a true

Christian, because he sees what appears to him a step backward in some particular, or on some occasion. On the other hand, it is exceedingly hazardous for any man to try to persuade himself that he is making spiritual progress on the whole, if candour compel him to admit that he can see nothing but retrogression in details. The only safe course is resolutely, persistently, and prayerfully, ‘forgetting those things which are behind, to reach forth unto those things which are before.’ There is, as we have seen, no standing still. Listlessness means loss. ‘From him that hath not’ gain, ‘shall be taken away even that which he hath.’ Let us then, my brethren, ‘press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ Thus, through grace, we shall be enabled to ‘grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ.’ Thus, having put forth ‘the blade,’ we shall in due course put forth ‘the ear,’ and at last ‘the full corn in the ear,’ which God will gather into His heavenly garner.

## XXII.

## TRUE WISDOM PROVED BY GODLINESS.

'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.  
16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.'—PHIL. iii. 15, 16.

THE apostle has spoken of his personal convictions regarding the needfulness of progress in spiritual wisdom and strength and beauty, and of his longings and struggles to make progress. In the section beginning with the verses now before us, and extending to the 1st, or perhaps the 3d, verse of the next chapter, he applies what he has said on this subject to the purpose of exhortation, as exhibiting the convictions and the kind of life which ought to be found in all Christians.

He begins by an appeal to his readers to embrace, and hold firmly, the same *views* which he did, in regard to the duty of persistent effort after progress in holiness. '*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.*' The phrase '*be minded*'—which in this respect, as in every other, excellently represents the original word—has a wide range of reference, pointing not unfrequently to the action of the affections, more directly than to that of the judgment. But in this place the '*God shall reveal,*' which occurs in the latter part of the verse, shows distinctly that the writer is thinking mainly of convictions of truth.

The words '*as many as be perfect*' startle us somewhat at first,—appearing as they do to contradict universal Christian experience, the experience set forth by the apostle himself only three

verses before, where he says that he did not suppose himself to be 'already perfect.' It becomes plain, however, on a little consideration, that the word, instead of being employed, according to our common usage, and as it is employed in the 12th verse, to designate entire freedom from moral defect, is intended to bear a considerably modified meaning. We find on examination that '*perfect*' not unfrequently in the New Testament describes simply a maturity—a ripeness and richness of knowledge, or character, or both—such as might be supposed to mark the full-grown man, as contrasted with the babe in Christ. The naturalness and obviousness of this, for those among whom the apostolic writings were first circulated, will be evident, when I mention to you that the same Greek word which is translated '*perfect*', often means nothing more than '*full-grown*', or '*come to man's estate*'. Thus, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (v. 14), '*Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age;*' and in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xiv. 20), '*In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*' No doubt the apostle's meaning in the place before us, then, is, '*Let us, as many as are mature, be thus minded,—hold firmly those views of duty which I have just expressed.*'

From the nature of the case, we must suppose maturity in *knowledge* to be in his thoughts; for a reference to maturity in *character* would, in this passage, have little pertinence or force,—implying, as it plainly would, that the persons addressed did already hold with a firm grasp those views of duty which the apostle is enjoining. The whole tone of his exhortation appears to presuppose a likelihood that the *character* of some to whom he speaks is as yet but *immature*. But there is much pertinence and force in a reference to maturity in *knowledge*,—seeing that, as we gather from the connection of the passage with the previous part of the chapter, he means by this especially emancipation from the bonds of legalism, and keen perception of the completeness of justification through faith in

Christ. Now recoil from trust in fancied obedience to the law of God as a way of salvation, might be into disregard of that law as a rule or guide of life. As the apostle has already hinted in the verses preceding the present, and states explicitly in the 18th and 19th, there were some in his time who thus abused the precious doctrines of grace to their own ruin. It was therefore highly needful that those of the Philippians who, with regard to the way of reconciliation with God, had put away childish things, and attained a manly clearness and breadth of view, should have very distinctly brought before their minds the duty of showing also manly wisdom and strength and energy in the service of God. It was of supreme moment for them to understand that for full Christian ‘maturity’ is required knowledge—vital, influential knowledge—that the object of the Lord’s self-devotion for us was not merely ‘to deliver us from the wrath to come,’ but to accomplish an end grander even than this,—to save us from the power of sin, and make us in character like Himself.

We have seen that the use of the word ‘*perfect*’ in the sense which it evidently bears here, ‘mature,’ is not unfrequent. Still Paul’s choice of this particular term, so very shortly after he had earnestly disclaimed belief in his being personally ‘perfect’ in the stricter sense, seems strange. But a probable explanation is not far to seek. The apostle has already prominently in his thoughts the antinomian abusers of evangelical doctrine, of whom, as has been said, he comes to speak expressly in the 18th and 19th verses. He has turned the minds of his readers to them by the emphasis—not perceptible in our version, but very marked in the original—with which, in the beginning of the 13th verse, he has spoken of his own personal convictions: ‘Brethren, I at least do not count myself to have apprehended,’—the thought being plainly suggested, ‘whatever others may think regarding themselves.’ Now we know from statements in the early Christian fathers, that, in the age immediately following that of the apostles, the antinomians had special

delight in summing up their claims to manly ripeness of knowledge by calling themselves ‘the perfect.’ If we suppose, then, what is every way likely, that already in Paul’s days this was a favourite word with them, you will see at once the point and force which would be recognised by the apostle’s readers in his use of the term here: ‘Let us—as many as have attained to that manly liberty through the knowledge of Christ, which those men claim for themselves, and speak of with such pride—prove that we have true spiritual wisdom, by not subjecting ourselves, as those foolish ones have done, to another form of crushing slavery, but devoting ourselves joyfully and earnestly to that loving service of God which is the only real freedom.’

Brethren, if you and I intelligently hold the creed which we profess, then we are among those whom the apostle here speaks of as ‘perfect.’ The Christian church was for many ages kept by Popish falsehood in bondage, or in a constant childhood; but the churches of the Reformation are churches of men, of freemen. We glory in the cross of Christ, in justification by faith, in a full salvation through divine grace. Now I have no reason to suppose that, with this creed, any of us have consciously adopted antinomian views. That heresy, so repulsive to all healthy Christian feeling, so utterly offensive indeed to ordinary good sense, has never had any hold on our Scottish churches. Yet I fear there may be not a few of us who have far from a clear and impressive view of the transcendent importance of personal holiness, and of the prominence which this has in God’s salvation. We are all prone to think more of happiness, of pardon and peace, than of purity and godliness. Now, in truth, the *primary* element in eternal life is beauty and strength of *character*. As Christian wisdom ripens, conviction of the surpassing grandeur of this element in the great gift of God grows clearer and firmer; and of the hope of being with Christ for ever in heaven the chief preciousness is more and more felt to lie in the assurance that then, up to the fullest capabilities of our nature, ‘we shall be like Him, for

we shall see Him as He is.' 'Let us therefore,' my brethren, 'as many as be perfect, be thus minded.'

The apostle proceeds to give a promise of divine enlightenment on moral subjects for those who see aright the importance of persistent effort after holiness : '*and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this (or this also) unto you.*' The introductory '*and*' intimates that the exhortation of the former clause is here assumed to have been followed,— '*and, supposing that, on the whole, you are thus minded, then.*' '*Otherwise*' means, '*otherwise than as accords with those great principles of duty which have been spoken of as exemplified by me.*' The word is therefore simply a mild way of saying '*wrongly.*' The matters referred to are minor points, details in the bringing into practice of convictions respecting the importance of a holy life. In a world where interests and relations are so complex, where knowledge both of facts and of principles is often so difficult to attain, and where, even so far as attained, it is frequently in so great a degree coloured and vitiated by feeling, it is to be expected that Christians, even when sincerely pressing on to '*apprehend that for which they have been apprehended of Christ Jesus,*' should many times choose a mistaken course. The mists that shrouded the earth before the dawn do not take their flight at the very first touch of the morning sun. But before his waxing strength they disappear. So will it be, the apostle says, with moral mists. From differences of temperament, education, and circumstances of many kinds, the rate of progress in moral intelligence varies greatly among Christians ; but in all who are honestly striving to become like their Master, there will be the advance which, in the first chapter of the Epistle, Paul says he supplicated for his Philippian friends, '*in knowledge, and all delicacy of spiritual perception, so as to distinguish things which differ*' (i. 9, 10).

The truth here exhibited, that a sincere servant of God will, through divine grace, grow in spiritual wisdom—his light waxing

brighter and brighter until the glories of the perfect day break upon him,—is familiar to every student of the Bible. ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.’ ‘If any man be willing to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.’

Various considerations show that a pious man—a man on whose heart such convictions have been impressed as those which Paul tells us in the preceding verses had been impressed on his—is in the most favourable circumstances for receiving more and more enlightenment in religious truth. For one thing, his piety leads him to *think much about religion*, and to avail himself of all means of knowledge on the subject. By native temperament, and the influence of circumstances, men are led to choose very varied lines of study; but no one is drawn by nature to a candid, unprejudiced contemplation of the grandest of all subjects, the character and will of God. By nature we ‘do not like to retain God in our knowledge,’—we say, ‘Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.’ So long as we love to disobey God, the thought of Him brings us pain, and will therefore naturally be shunned. As lawless men prowl at midnight rather than at noon, so those whose hearts are alienated from God ‘love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.’ Such men, in studying God’s works, stop at second causes. In looking at the movements of the world, they recognise the hand of emperors, and generals, and statesmen, but not of God. They feel no interest in reading the word of God; and if habit, or superstition, or respect for the opinion of neighbours, lead them to His house, they find no enjoyment there, and hear and remember as little of the truth as possible. But a man whose aim is to serve God, finds everything which relates to Him to be of profoundest interest. Love and admiration for his divine King lead him to meditate with delight on His character and ways,—to pursue with eagerness the study of the revelation which He has given

of Himself,—and to watch with attention and thoughtfulness the working among men around him of different moral principles, and different modes of carrying out the same principle. Everything which can give him light on difficult duty, or exhibit to him a new aspect of the motives to holy obedience, he is eager to search into. Thus he is obviously in a fair way to grow always spiritually wiser.

Again, *the mind and heart of a man who is in earnest pursuit of holiness, are in a state fitted to apprehend divine truth*—a state of spiritual sensitiveness, of sympathy or community of feeling with God. By the faith of God's truth, as known to some extent, the desire of holiness has been awakened; and, according to the beautiful system of action and reaction which prevails throughout the Christian life, as this desire strengthens and is followed out, susceptibility to all influences calculated to increase moral and spiritual wisdom grows continually. When longings after spiritual strength and nobleness are wanting, the words in which God has made known His will remain mere words—destitute of life and illuminating power; and though there may be a pure morality, as regards the relation of man to man, yet to all lessons, from every quarter, on our moral relations to God, the eye is blind, the ear deaf, the mind dull. If a non-Christian man were to express the thoughts which occur to him, when he hears believers speak of the inmost and most precious verities and experiences of the Christian life — of fellowship with God, of love to God, of obtaining strength and comfort through prayer, of living under heavenly influences, of everything, in short, which pertains to the motives and modes of spiritual morality,—he would acknowledge that words like these convey no definite meaning to him. As a man entirely destitute of ear for music, finds in the sublimest strains of Handel or Beethoven no special significance or sweetness; so to the eternal harmonies of the loftiest truth the souls of those who are alienated from the life of God are utterly dull. To the man who is minded, like the Apostle Paul, to 'press toward

the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God,' the melody comes home with full sweetness and power. Or, to take another illustration,—on common paper the sunlight falls and leaves no trace,—on the prepared paper of the photographer, made sensitive by certain chemical applications, the light so acts as to leave that distinct impression of friends and scenes which is so familiar to us all. So on a soul which has no yearnings after holiness the light of the Sun of righteousness falls but makes no mark,—on a soul prepared and made sensitive by holy love, God's pictures of spiritual beauty are printed indelibly ; and by and by, when Christ shall appear, His image will be reproduced perfectly in His people.

In all this, my brethren,—in the disposition which a sincerely pious man has to study divine truth with attention and interest, and in the power of spiritual apprehension which his desire of holiness gives him,—we recognise the working of God Himself, God the Holy Ghost, through whom alone we can have true wisdom and holy desire. It is at His creative word, 'Let there be light,' that the darkness of ignorance and prejudice flies away,—at His command that the chaos of wicked thoughts, proud imaginations, and despairing fears, is changed into a scene of smiling beauty. And as the Christian life thus begins through His agency, so by Him it is sustained—by Him every movement towards progress in knowledge and godliness prompted, supported, regulated, and made successful. Of the work of this divine Agent, you observe, Paul here speaks expressly : 'If, whilst you have on the whole sound views of Christian duty, there be yet here and there some point of which your apprehension is imperfect, *God will reveal to you that also.*' The '*that also*' implies, 'as to His gracious instruction are to be ascribed all the attainments you have already made.' By '*reveal*' here, Paul evidently does not mean such supernatural communications of truth as were made to the prophets, apostles, and other inspired teachers of the church ; for his statement refers to Christians generally. He designates by it that guid-

ance into all needed truth which the Divine Spirit gives by means of the seriousness and candour of inquiry, and spiritual sensibility, of which I have already spoken,—by blessing the believer's study of the Bible, converse with fellow-Christians, observation of men and things around, reading and thought on history and philosophy. The Christian, having asked the direction of the Holy Spirit, knows that he has received it, though His guidance be commonly indistinguishable from the workings of his own judgment; and of all his progress in spiritual wisdom he ascribes the glory to God.

The apostle's word '*reveal*,' as thus applied, is well fitted to remind us of the general truth that God is very near us, and constantly acting directly upon and around us. The tendencies of scientific thought in our day are strongly toward hiding this,—giving prominence to secondary causes, instead of to the God who works through them. Scripture would have us everywhere discern the hand of 'the living God.' You see a Christian busy with his Bible. Looking up, he tells you, 'I have been consulting some marginal references; and have obtained a new and most comforting view of the meaning of the verses I have been studying.' Now no doubt it was the marginal references which guided our friend to his knowledge; but the apostle tells you here that 'God revealed the truth to him.' The marginal references were only God's instruments; and a wise man lifts his eyes from the instruments to the ever-gracious Lord. This closeness of relation to God spiritually, all believers recognise; less so, not in creed, but in our feelings and practically as regards prayer, the closeness of the relations to Him of our physical life. We know a great deal more of natural science now than the Hebrew believers did three thousand years ago; and this advance is to be rejoiced in, for accurate knowledge of any subject worth knowing at all is a good thing. But those old Hebrews saw God and heard God everywhere; and if we allow our science to blind us and deafen us to Him—to put away our sense of His nearness, and of our constant

dependence on Him,—then assuredly we permit our knowledge, or the influence on public feeling of the knowledge around us, to affect most injuriously our spiritual vigour, and beauty, and joy. Christian happiness and Christian strength are always most fully experienced when our Father's hand is ever seen and ever felt,—when in the thunder we hear the voice of the Lord—in the sunlight and the shower see our Father in heaven ‘making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust’—and in the joys of harvest behold Him ‘opening His hand,’ and supplying the need of His creatures.

The 16th verse, in the form in which we have it in our version,—‘*Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing,*’—appears to be an injunction that, in so far as believers ‘see eye to eye,’ they should cherish and display their unity. Most thoughtful readers, I should suppose, have felt difficulty in seeing naturalness in the occurrence of this precept in the passage. It is in itself a most important precept; but it does not seem to lie in the line of the apostle’s remarks, not standing in close or easy connection either with what precedes or what follows. The fact is, however, that the injunction is not one to unity. The diligent examination which has been made, since the time our translators did their work, of the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, has shown that in all probability the last words of the verse, from ‘rule’ onwards, do not belong to the original text, but have slipped in from the glosses or comments of transcribers. The precept, therefore, is really this, ‘*Nevertheless*’ (or ‘But,’ ‘Only’), ‘*whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same,*’—these closing words being an emphatic way of saying, ‘by that’—namely, ‘that to which we have attained,’—a kind of condensation of ‘by it, and not by other principles or rules.’ You will see, at once, that the connection of this with what immediately precedes is very close and natural and important. The apostle has said, ‘Let us all

cherish convictions of the needfulness of progress in holiness ; and if you honestly do this, then, supposing that on any particular point of moral duty you should have defective views, God, through His Spirit, will make truth on this also known to you.' Now he proceeds thus,—' But let us all see to it,—for this is the matter of chief moment, and is an essential condition of our obtaining such growth in spiritual enlightenment as I have spoken of,—that we try honestly to guide our lives by the light we have already attained to.' This counsel again leads most naturally to the course of remark in the following verses, in which the important influence on Christian conduct of a wise choice of examples is pointed out.

You observe that the apostle states his precept in a way to show expressly that he laid it down for himself as well as his readers : ' Whereto *we* have attained, by the same let *us* walk.' ' This is a principle,' he says, ' of universal validity in the Christian life. Notwithstanding all the abundant revelations which God has granted me, I am still struggling forward, like yourselves, into fuller light on grace and on duty. Let us remember, then, dear brethren, that it is a necessary condition for us of fuller light, that each of us apply faithfully to his own life the measure of insight which has been imparted to him.' We all feel how winning this inclusion of himself in the same class as his readers is. Cæsar's soldiers said, ' He never *sends* us into hot battle,—he always *leads* us.' Christian counsels, too, are likely to have a peculiarly imperial power, when they take the form ' Come,' not ' Go.'

That the man who will obtain fuller knowledge of the will of God is the man who conscientiously and prayerfully strives to do that will, so far as he yet knows it,—is a truth which underlies all the teaching of Scripture regarding the nature and possibility of spiritual progress. It is ' by the truth ' that we are to be ' made free ' from the thraldom of depraved desire ; and the knowledge that He whom the Father heareth always has prayed, ' Sanctify them through Thy truth,' brings with it

the assurance that all who, looking to Jesus as their Strength, are heartily struggling for emancipation, will have granted to them ever a firmer and fuller apprehension of the emancipating truth. The light will grow towards the ‘perfect day.’ God’s dealings in this respect, in the dispensation of His grace, accord with what we see every day in the physical sphere. Within certain limits, the exercise of power tends to bring more power. ‘To him that hath is given.’ To the ‘shatirs’ who run before the king of Persia—as ‘Elijah girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel’—practice from childhood has given such activity of limb, that they can keep pace for many hours with a fleet horse. The swing of the heavy hammer makes the muscles of the blacksmith’s arms ‘strong as iron bands.’ Similarly, ‘if a man be willing to *do* the will of God,’ which is the legitimate exercise of such religious knowledge as he has, ‘he shall know of the doctrine’ further. The believer who, ‘whereto he has attained, walks by the same,’ will find his ‘attainment’ increasing continually. For the man who fills his sphere of light with spiritual vigilance—strenuous opposition to the temptations of the world, and the flesh, and the devil—earnest effort, according to opportunity, to extend the kingdom of truth and righteousness,—the illuminated circle will steadily widen.

On the other hand, a gift of God unused is withdrawn. ‘From him that hath not’ interest on the entrusted talent, ‘shall be taken away even that which he hath.’ The indolent become feeble. The arm of the Eastern ascetic, drawn up over the head and kept rigid there, gradually grows powerless and withered. So with knowledge in religion. If the man who knows the truth be not heartily and perseveringly ‘a *doer* of the word’ he knows, his knowledge, as a spiritual power, peace-giving and strengthening, ebbs away. As an intellectual perception, yielding material for thought and debate, it may remain and even increase; but, spiritually, such a man is always growing darker.

You feel, my brethren, that the precept of the apostle here is one of vast importance ; one, too, with which, in a world like this, it is exceedingly hard faithfully to comply. Every one of us fails to ‘walk’ perfectly in accordance with that knowledge of duty ‘whereto he has attained ;’ and the consciences of some of us may testify, if we question them unflinchingly, that our life is very far indeed below even our own conception of what it ought to be. Natural indolence and perversity press heavily on our convictions, to prevent them from rising to full operative vigour. The world—that is to say, practically, the people we associate with in business and privately, and the newspapers and books we read, for these form a very influential part of our society,—the world has a scheme of life of its own, a doctrine of proprieties, which leaves out much, and—unless here and there perhaps for Christians altogether exceptionally situated—opposes itself to not a few things that the servant of Christ knows to be in harmony with the will of his Master. ‘Walking,’ as we do, reasonably and rightly, in accordance with this doctrine of proprieties, where it is not inconsistent with the ‘doctrine of Christ,’—we are all in great hazard of continuing for some distance in accordance with it, even where, as we have a more or less definite consciousness, it diverges from the line of true and noble Christian morality. The peril is especially great in circumstances like those of most of us,—where our ‘world’ consists very largely of professing Christians, to whom, not unnaturally, we look for help, rather than hindrance, in our endeavours to perform Christian duty. Behind all the other influences calculated to prevent in believers conformity of practice to conviction, too, is the ‘prince of this world,’ with his subtlety and power and malignity ; whom nothing gratifies more—for he knows that nothing serves his interests more—than a low-toned life in those who have ‘named the name of Christ.’

If, then, dear friends, the direction of our affections and the features of our life are at all adequately to accord with our

knowledge of duty,—if, ‘whereto we have attained,’ we are at all to ‘walk by the same,’—then, plainly, there must be a ‘girding up of the loins of our mind’—resolution, watchfulness, and prayer. Let us seek to live in close and constant fellowship with God, in ‘the secret of His tabernacle.’ Let us ‘abide in Christ,’—remembering that He ‘is made of God to us’ no less our ‘sanctification’ than our justifying ‘righteousness.’ Thus ‘the joy of the Lord shall be our strength.’ Each of us will be enabled to ‘unite his heart,’ gathering up all its energies, and sending them out in the one direction, to do the will of God. We shall hear our Saviour’s voice behind us, saying, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it;’ and we shall have grace given to walk therein, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. We shall receive of Him growing delicacy of spiritual apprehension, and growing firmness to follow His word, given through the Bible and the conscience, and to leave thoughts of mere expediency and carnal policy to those who know nothing higher.

## XXIII.

## WISE CHOICE OF EXAMPLES.

‘ Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ : 19 Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.’—  
PHIL. iii. 17-19.

THE apostle has been impressing upon his readers the needfulness of having clear views with regard to the importance of personal holiness, and of persistent effort to maintain a practice accordant with such views. In the passage before us, continuing his observations on this subject, he directs their thoughts to the influence of example. He points out to them that many to whom, as assuming no little prominence in the church, they might naturally look for practical illustration of the moral principles of Christianity, lived in a way wholly opposed to the spirit of the gospel ; and calls upon them to shun taking such persons as models, and, instead, to imitate his own character, and that of others who, like him, plainly strove to follow ‘ whatsoever things were true, and honourable, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report.’ Of the immoral teachers he gives a description, in some detail, in the 18th and 19th verses ; and we shall perhaps best attain a clear view of the force of the whole passage by examining this description first, and then, with it in our minds, going back to consider what is said in the 17th.

‘ Many walk,’ the apostle says, ‘ of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of

*the cross of Christ : whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*' You feel that the word '*walk*' sounds somewhat oddly in its connection here. You expect to find an adverbial phrase attached to it,—'*wickedly*,' for example, or '*in such a way as to prove themselves enemies of the cross*.' Paul probably intended at first to construct his sentence so, but, by the relative clause he inserts, was led to express himself a little differently.

The Philippians doubtless had no difficulty in knowing to whom Paul referred in this description. During his visits to them he had '*told them often*' of this class of men ; and the intensity of feeling with which he writes on the subject—for he '*now tells them even weeping*',—suggests a likelihood that the perversities which had pained him formerly, had grown yet more pronounced and notorious. We can only conjecture who these men were ; but the probabilities, as it seems to me, tend all in one direction. They were plainly persons whom, from their position, Christians might not unnaturally be expected to regard as models of character. They had some prominence in the church therefore, and in all likelihood, as indeed I have already assumed by using the designation a little ago in speaking of them, were teachers who itinerated among the churches. The apostle's language suggests also that the class he alludes to was a well defined one, probably by peculiarities of doctrine. Now the Judaizing opponents of Paul, whom he mentions so frequently in his letters, and to whom he has referred in the beginning of this chapter in terms of just and indignant severity, do not answer to the description here. Arrogant, self-seeking, unspiritual they were ; but we have no reason to think of them as men of flagrantly immoral lives, such as the verses before us appear to ascribe to the class of teachers here meant. One can scarcely doubt, all things considered, that the reference is to abusers of the doctrines of grace, who said, '*Let us do evil, that good may come.*' As has been pointed out to you in pre-

vious lectures, these seem to have been before the apostle's mind from the 13th verse. His beloved flock at Philippi was exposed to the attacks of two bodies of 'grievous wolves,'—those who would have them look on keeping God's law as, to some extent, a means of earning eternal life as their wages; and those who would have them disregard the law as a rule of conduct. Their watchful shepherd, endeavouring lovingly to guard them against both, passes most naturally and wisely from the exposure of legalism in the beginning of the chapter to the exposure of antinomianism here.

Now, my brethren, you and I are not likely to encounter persons exactly of the kind described by the apostle in these verses. Immoral teachers of religion there may be, though—thanks be to God for it!—very greatly fewer than our fathers knew. Much defective and even false theology, too, is taught from the pulpit and the press; the ultimate tendency of which, no doubt, as of everything which turns away the soul from the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, is towards immorality. But direct and conscious teaching of immorality, under the name of Christianity, must in our day be altogether exceptional, if it exist at all. Still, dear friends, this most melancholy statement, by one of Christ's inspired servants, respecting the character of many professing Christians of his time; and his solemn declaration of the awful end to which that character, if maintained, would certainly bring them,—have most impressive teaching for us. If we have ears to hear, the apostle is heard warning us of the need of prayerfulness, self-study, and spiritual vigilance; seeing how little the mere profession of religion ensures an elevated morality, or a well-founded hope of eternal life. These men—persons plainly of considerable mark in the church, and possessed of attractions of some kind, such as might not improbably gain them a number of admirers, even in a pure and intelligent Christian community like that of Philippi—lived a life not only divergent from that which the gospel, understood and believed, is calculated to form; but in many

respects, as we shall immediately see in detail, directly opposed to it. Let us ‘watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.’

The men of whom Paul speaks, differed, he tells us, from genuine Christians with regard to the very first principle of religion. *The object of their worship was not the same.*

The true believer *has taken the living God*—the God who made him, who sustains him, who sent His Son to save him—to be his God. It was not so once. By nature he had grievous misconceptions of the divine character. According to his temperament and his training, he regarded God as stern and cold, destitute of pity and tenderness, a Being whom it was impossible to please or to love; or as weakly indulgent and placable, ready, because of His boundless mercy, to overlook misconduct in His creatures, and welcome them all at last to peace and heaven. On either view, there was no motive to think of God with interest and reverence, or to endeavour to do His will. But, having ‘learned Christ,’ the believer sees God in Him to be the Infinitely Admirable, the ‘Altogether Lovely.’ He counts it most reasonable that, with all his energies, he should serve the God who gave him those energies,—the supremely True, and Holy, and Kind. The love and fellowship of his heavenly Father are felt by him to satisfy all his capacities of happiness; and therefore, while many say, ‘Who will show us any good?’ his cry is, ‘Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.’

But of the men—professing Christians—to whom the apostle here refers, he says that their ‘*god is their belly.*’ Sensuality had dominion over them. The living God expresses His will that we should be ‘temperate in all things,’ and should ‘have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them;’ and declares that ‘no drunkard, nor unclean

person, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' But the desires of the flesh invite to self-indulgence,—to gluttony, revelling, drunkenness; to gaudiness, extravagance, immodesty of dress; to impurity of speech and conduct. This call these persons habitually obeyed, thus clearly showing that practically, whatever their professions, bodily appetite was their god, their supreme ruler. The heathen whom the King of Assyria settled in central Canaan, after he had removed the ten tribes to the far east, were troubled and terrified by lions; and, with a view to propitiate Him who had sent the wild beasts against them, petitioned their king for the services of a priest of Israel, to 'teach them the manner of the God of the land.' 'Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places.' So 'they feared the Lord, and served their own gods.' Ah, my brethren, would that we could think of this conjunction of formal 'fearing' of Jehovah with 'serving,' by the devotion of heart and life, men's 'own gods,' as having belonged only to old days! Would that we could regard Paul's sketch of nominal Christians, 'whose god is their belly,' as having suitableness merely to the past!

Again,—a true Christian *has learned to look with any measure of satisfaction, as regards his character, only on evidences of growing accordance with the will of God.* His great hope is that, 'when Christ shall appear, he shall be like Him;' and meantime he rejoices greatly in any proof that he is being gradually changed by the Divine Spirit into his Saviour's image. That change he regards as 'from glory to glory'; and he can esteem nothing in character as truly a grace, or a beauty, or a glory, which does not stand in vital connection with a holy will. Sin his heart loathes as shameful, the only really shameful thing in God's universe.

But the abusers of the doctrines of divine grace in Paul's

days felt ‘*glory in their shame.*’ Alas, how many followers of these men we meet! The tradesman, ‘professing godliness,’ boasts of his ‘smart’ tricks in business—within the letter of his country’s law, but utterly opposed to the spirit of true rectitude; and marvels that any should not admire him, or should suppose the Sermon on the Mount to have anything to do with business. The husband and father, whose name is on a communion roll, associates by choice with godless companions, grows neglectful of the ordinances of religion, spends for the good of the publican what would feed and clothe his poor half-naked, half-starved wife and children ;—and exults that ‘he is no bigot, but has a religion which lets a man enjoy himself.’ ‘These are raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame.’

Further,—the true Christian *has come to see*—and this with a distinctness and vividness influencing powerfully his feelings and his life—that *man was made for an end higher than any which the pursuits, and speculations, and enjoyments of earth present.* He feels that there are elements in his nature which, to a candid thinker, show as clearly that he was not meant by his Creator to live simply for this world, as that he was not meant to browse with the ox, or grovel with the serpent. The grand purpose of the Word of God he recognises to be, to show him the objects which are suited to occupy his loftiest powers, and to satisfy his capacities of spiritual happiness. Accordingly, he has ‘set his affections on things which are above,’ and lives more or less fully under ‘the powers of the world to come.’ Heaven is as real to his apprehensions as earth, and, in the proportion of his faith, more influential over his heart. In the business of this life to which God’s providence has called him he is diligent and faithful ; and glad and grateful if he prosper in it. But he measures the worth of worldly prosperity, and the strength of the world’s claim to occupy his thoughts and his time, by other standards than those of earth. He knows that ‘the world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.’ Hence pro-

sperity of the *soul*—prosperity as regards his relations to the unseen world—appears to him immeasurably the more important ; and he desires very earnestly that success in worldly matters may not injure him spiritually, but may be turned by him to such account as, in every way, to glorify God. Worldly adversity, bereavement, personal affliction, may give him pain, perhaps much pain ; yet he knows adversity to be very far from the worst thing which could befall him. He knows that the trial comes from Him who, ‘though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich,’—who, being ‘the Prince of Life,’ yielded Himself to suffering and death, that we might live for ever. Poverty and suffering sent by this Saviour to His people he cannot doubt to be sent in love, to contribute to spiritual and enduring wealth and blessedness.

Now the professing Christians at present before the apostle’s mind are said by him to ‘*mind earthly things*.’ This statement has a very wide range of reference. The form of expression in the original shows that the clause is not co-ordinate with the descriptions of character we have already considered,—as the third term in a series ; but rather stands by itself, as an exhibition of depraved thought and feeling generally, summing up the others, and including more. A vast multitude of professing Christians who can persuade themselves that the features previously mentioned are not found in their character—that it cannot be said of them, in any strict use of the words, that ‘their god is their belly,’ or that they ‘glory in their shame,’—will find that they cannot speak boldly with respect to this feature. They are decorous livers, honest too, and kindly,—but they ‘*mind earthly things*,’—they have their thoughts and their affections occupied exclusively, or supremely, with the interests of this world. To make money, or to spend it,—to become learned, or famous, or influential,—to go through life peaceably and pleasantly,—to gain in one way or another self-gratification,—this is their aim, and nothing more than this. God, and

holiness, and heaven, are ideas which have little power over them. They hear of them on Sabbath, and the words are prominent in the creed which they profess and imagine themselves to hold;—but they ‘*mind earthly things.*’ These it is that occupy their thoughts, and are the objects of their real desires. For these it is that they live, for these that they run risks, for these that they make sacrifices. It is of earthly advantages and joys alone that every one of this unhappy class of persons says to his soul—the soul which God made to be nourished by fellowship with Himself,—‘Soul, thou hast much goods laid up; take thine ease.’

All whose character exhibits the features we have been considering—all who are sensual and worldly—are, the apostle tells us, ‘*enemies of the cross of Christ.*’ They may declare their admiration of the Lord Jesus, and specially of His self-sacrifice for men. They may, in words, ‘glory in the cross of Christ.’ They may, at the communion table, profess to ‘show forth His death’ as the ground of their hope for eternity. Those immediately referred to by the apostle counted themselves the great assertors of the sublime power of the cross, as setting men free from the bondage of fear and superstition, and introducing them into ‘glorious liberty.’ Yet, in truth, they were its ‘*enemies.*’ In the cross we have the most explicit and impressive declaration which even God could give, of His hatred of sin. The grand purpose of the Lord Jesus in His self-devotion to death for us—a purpose most distinctly made known by Him, and obvious to every gospel hearer who is willing to allow the truth to enter his soul—was ‘that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’ He has most distinctly taught us that every man who desires to be saved through Him, must himself, in a sense, ‘take up the cross, and bear it after Him,’—must ‘know the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed unto His death.’ Now such persons as those whom Paul describes here, show by their lives that they have

no sympathy with these lessons of the cross,—no spiritual apprehension of them, nor desire for any. Instead of dying with the Saviour to sin, they manifestly live to sin. Boasting of liberty, they are, in truth, ‘the slaves of corruption ; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.’ Instead of denying themselves, and, for the glory of God and the eternal interests of the soul, bearing the cross of self-restraint with respect to the seductions of this world, they give up their hearts to this world, ‘minding earthly things.’ There can be no doubt, therefore, that they hate the spirit and the teaching of Calvary. They are ‘enemies of the cross of Christ.’

Nay more. The cross has many other foes,—multitudes who denounce, deride, and in every way avowedly oppose it. But its worst enemies, in the eyes of God, the most influential for evil, the least likely ever to become its friends, are professed believers in the doctrines of the cross who yet ‘mind earthly things.’ This fact is brought out by the apostle in the little word ‘*the*,’—‘*the* enemies of the cross.’ These are the enemies by pre-eminence. None do such harm to the cause of the cross—the cause of truth and love and peace,—as those who, calling themselves Christians, live for this world only. ‘What are these wounds in Thine hands?’ ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.’ Men who, with the lip, ‘glory in the cross of Christ,’ but, with the voice of their lives, ‘glory in their shame,’ ‘crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.’

And if they persist in their hostility of heart to that cross, through which alone is salvation, then, says the apostle, their ‘*end is destruction*.’ God hates sin, and will overthrow it. His grace, if we will accept it, will overthrow the sin in us by which we are oppressed; and thus save us. But if we resolutely cleave to our sins, then not even the grace of God can save us. Consistently with His own nature and with ours, God cannot make us happy without making us holy. And no doom will be so awful as that of the professed friend of the cross who is

really its enemy. Wherever the gospel comes, it comes as a power ; and if a man will not open his heart, that, entering in, it may show itself in his case as ‘the power of God unto salvation,’ then his acquaintance with it cannot but render his ‘*destruction*’ more terrible. The word of God is *always* ‘quick and powerful.’ It makes the heart tender, humble, and contrite,—or harder. It brings into a state of acceptance with God,—or it renders the condemnation more awful. If a man will resolutely dwell in darkness, he must, of necessity, self-destroyed, go out at last into the ‘outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

There were ‘*many*’ professing Christians, the apostle says, who ‘walked’ in the way he has described,—journeying on, in the paths of worldliness and sensuality, towards the ‘dark mountains’ where men’s feet ‘stumble.’ Consideration of the position in which the church is placed in our age and country, my brethren—when some degree of Christian profession is helpful to social respectability, and somewhat aids a man to get rich—might lead us to think it likely that, if inconsistency of life was not uncommon in the despised and persecuted church of the first days, it will be yet more sadly common now. Any spiritually-minded observer will find deplorably conclusive evidence that with such an anticipation the facts accord. The very liveliest Christian charity cannot refuse to see that, of members of the church of Christ, ‘many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.’ Hence arises a great peril for the beauty and stability of the character of other professors. The proverbially powerful influence of example is not felt merely where models are definitely chosen. We are all apt to take colour from association, even where no intention is further from our minds than that of imitating. To mingle daily with persons who call themselves servants of Christ, partake with us of the symbols of the Lord’s dying love, profess to seek the guidance of the same Divine Spirit to whom we look for direction, and to cherish the same ‘blessed hope’ which sustains

and stimulates us—and who yet maintain a conformity to the principles and practices of ‘them that are without,’ by ‘minding earthly things,’—it is impossible, my brethren, that this can be without serious spiritual danger. Intercourse with low-toned professors will inevitably lower our own tone of feeling, unless, conscious of the hazard, we set ourselves to resist, by earnest prayer for strength and wisdom, and by thoughtful consideration of the *principles* which express themselves in the lives of those around us.

It is of very high importance, too, that, by choice and attention, we bring the influence of *good* examples to act upon us. You know that our calling, as Christians, is to be in character like God, like Christ. This supreme example, then, it becomes us to have habitually before our minds, according to the constant injunction of Scripture: ‘Be ye followers (imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.’ It is exceedingly helpful also, however, to study the example of eminent servants of Christ, men conspicuous for devotedness and wisdom, energy and patience. In all merely human examples there are defects, and therefore they need to be compared always with the perfect standard of holiness in the character of the Lord Jesus. But the very fact that a man, obviously of high spirituality, has reached that spirituality through severe struggle, and has still to maintain a warfare with depraved tendencies, gives his example a certain peculiar power and suitableness for us. Hence such Scripture exhortations as ‘Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises;’ ‘Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example.’

The apostle’s mind, then, being full of the thought of the many bad examples by which the Philippians were liable to be influenced—the example of men ‘whose end was destruction,’—nothing was more reasonable or natural than that he should say to them, ‘Mark (as an example) the perfect man, and be-

hold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.' But when he says, '*Be followers together—a body of imitators—of me, and mark—for imitation—them which walk so, as ye have us—myself and my companions—for an ensample;*'—a little difficulty may perhaps be felt as to how the selection of *himself* as an example is altogether consistent with the profound Christian humility by which he was distinguished. A very slight consideration of the circumstances of the case will remove any such difficulty. Christian humility does not imply blindness to what the Spirit of God has wrought in our character. On the contrary, the voice of this sweet grace enters in to bear a most important part in the harmony of the believer's song of grateful praise for increasing evidence of enlightenment, and purity, and usefulness, through divine teaching and support. The summary of a Christian's judgment of himself, if he be in real spiritual health, will always be, as good John Newton has it: 'I have ever to confess, with sorrow, that I am far from being what I ought to be, and far from what I wish to be; but also—blessed be God's name!—to testify that I am far, very far, from what I once was.' Whilst, however, we not merely may, but should, with gladness and gratitude, recognise the success which, 'through Him that loveth us,' we have in our struggles with sin; it is commonly, for reasons which every student of his own heart knows well, wisest and safest to speak of our knowledge on this head to God only. But even of this there is 'a time to speak' to our fellow-men. In some circumstances a reference by a Christian to what God has wrought in his character, and an appeal to others to 'be followers together of him,' may be signally wise, and perfectly accordant with profound humility. Such were the circumstances in which the Apostle Paul was placed, when writing to the Philippians, Corinthians, Thessalonians, and other churches he had been the instrument of raising among the heathen. In the society among which the members of these churches lived, immorality was universal—and this, shameless, flagrant, loath-

some, beyond what persons brought up as we have been can almost conceive. Moral truths which to us are elementary, were to those Christians wholly new and strange. They needed to be taught morals as children ; and as picture-teaching is commonly most effective with children, so with them—exposed not merely to the influences of a frightfully corrupt world, but to the misleading doctrines and example of many wicked professedly Christian teachers, such as those whom Paul describes in the passage now before us—no lesson on the Christian life could well be in every way so satisfactory, so easily understood, so full, so likely, from the great love they had for the apostle, to be welcomed and thoroughly learned, as this picture lesson, ‘Be ye followers together of me, and mark for imitation those which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.’ ‘For many of the details of duty, each of you must be left to think out prayerfully for himself what it is that his position specially requires ; but, as regards all the *broad outlines of duty*, I can safely urge you to imitate me. Admitting, with sorrow and abasement, the existence of many flaws and faults of character, still I know that the *kind of life* I lead—and Silas, and Timothy, and Luke, and the other dear brethren whom you have seen associated with me—is on the whole that which faith in Christ legitimately produces, and on which He looks down with approval. Think of our mode of life, then, as you remember it ; and take note of those among yourselves, or among teachers who visit you, that walk so as ye have us for an example or type,—*an example*, I say, for in all of us the type is truly one, the image of Christ, reflected in each more or less fully.’

If ever a mere man lived who could, without misleading, point to himself as an example of holiness, it was the Apostle Paul. The beauty and grandeur of his character are illustrated everywhere in his history and his letters. It is most manifest that he ‘gave all diligence to add to his faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to tem-

perance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.' At every point his life contrasted most markedly with that of the men described in the 18th and 19th verses. It is beyond all question that *the living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was his God*; and that *his bodily appetites were his servants, not his lords*. He 'kept under his body, and brought it into subjection.' 'So fought he, not as one that beateth the air.' His whole life was eminently and most obviously that of a spiritual man,—to whom 'earthly things' were important chiefly in their bearings on the heavenly. Having renounced for Christ's sake the most attractive prospects of distinction and wealth among his countrymen, he pursued with unwavering devotion the great work of glorifying God through the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom; and in his work was enabled even to 'glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.' No candid observer could entertain a moment's doubt that for Paul 'to live was Christ.' It was plain, too, that in his judgment the central fact in the history of Christ's mediatorial work was His death. The apostle *loved and gloried in the cross*; and meekly accepted *all* its teaching. How exquisitely the spirit of horror of sin and at the same time tender pity for sinners—the same spirit which led Jesus to the accursed tree for us,—breathes from this very passage, where we see Paul 'even weeping' over men's sins!<sup>1</sup> May you and I, my brethren, have ears to hear him saying to us, 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ!'

<sup>1</sup> In his *Life of Dr. John Duncan* (p. 197, note), Dr. David Brown, speaking of good Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen, says: 'I remember him once meeting in the street a person who made a religious profession, in a state of intoxication, and the laughing-stock of a crowd. The Doctor marked one fellow jeering at a great rate; and, holding up his staff before him, cried out in the hearing of the crowd, who were awed by his commanding look.—"Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you—not laughing, sir, not LAUGHING, but—weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."'

## XXIV.

## THE SAINT'S CITIZENSHIP AND HOPE.

'For our conversation is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.'—*PHIL. iii. 20, 21.*

THE word '*conversation*,' as I have had occasion to mention in a previous lecture, meant, at the time when our translation of the Bible was made, not simply, as now, 'the exchange of thought by speech,' but 'a course of life or conduct' generally. The force of the statement here, then, supposing our version to exhibit with precision the apostle's meaning, is this,—'Our life is such, in flower and fruit, as to show, more or less clearly, that its roots are "hid with Christ in God,"—such as to prove that our "affections are set on the things which are above," that our thoughts and our longings are habitually in heaven.' The reference in '*our*' is, in this case, to the apostle and those Christian teachers who lived as he did ; and the argument in support of the precept of the 17th verse, 'Be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample,' is thus completed in full form,—'for, whilst many pretentious teachers, who seek to draw you after them, lead a base life, minding earthly things, we try, in God's strength, to live a heavenly life,—and this is plainly what the beliefs and hopes of Christians require.'

It is very doubtful, however, whether the original word here rendered '*conversation*' was intended by the apostle to have this meaning. Its primary sense is '*country*,' or '*one's relation*

to his country,' 'citizenship.' Now this meaning suits excellently the apostle's course of thought. To the Philippians too, who, living in a Roman colony, were very familiar with the great privileges connected with citizenship in the imperial city, the thought, 'Our citizenship, as Christians, is in heaven,' could not but be a specially interesting, impressive, and gladdening one. It is probable, therefore, that the apostle, when, in writing to these Philippians, he chose this particular word, which he uses nowhere else, intended it to be taken in its primary meaning. In this case, the reference does not seem to be specially to Paul and other earnest-minded teachers, in contrast with the teachers who lived unholy lives, but to true Christians generally; and the course of thought in the whole passage is this,—'Follow me, and those who live like me. I need to warn you thus, for there are teachers whose conduct proves too plainly that their hearts are set supremely on the present world. Now this is the very opposite of the spirit which believers should cherish, *for our citizenship is in heaven.*'

In these verses Paul brings evidence that the persons whose views and conduct he has sketched were wholly unsuited to be examples to believers in Christ, by mentioning a few prominent facts regarding the position and expectations of Christians, with which the features of character he has described were utterly incongruous. The men he has spoken of 'minded earthly things'; but every intelligent Christian knows himself to be a '*citizen of heaven*', and therefore, by immediate inference, called on to 'set his affections on the things which are above.' Those men's 'god was their belly,' and their 'glory was in their shame.' True believers, on the other hand, knowing their body to be a '*vile body*'—a '*body of humiliation*'—feel, that instead of making it, or any of its organs, in any sense or degree a '*god*', it becomes them to struggle vigorously against the lusts which by nature reign in their members. At the same time, being well assured that their

bodies as well as their souls are in union with Christ, and that the Lord, at that coming for which they ‘look’ as their ‘blessed hope,’ will ‘change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body,’ they see it to be reasonable and needful that the body should be honoured in a true and rational way, by being devoted ‘as an instrument of righteousness unto God’—adorned with purity and sobriety—consecrated to the Redeemer, to labour in His cause and to bear His cross. With men ‘whose end was destruction,’ those who ‘looked for the Lord Jesus Christ *as a Saviour*’ for their whole being, could certainly have nothing in common, morally or spiritually.

‘*Citizenship*’ is a not uncommon representation in Scripture of the portion of Christians. To the Ephesian believers Paul says, ‘Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;’ and the Hebrew Christians are spoken of as having ‘come’—evidently as members of the community—‘unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God.’

This citizenship ‘*is in heaven*.’ It is true that ‘the earth is the Lord’s,’ and that by and by there shall be ‘great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.’ But meantime a usurper has much power here; and, so long as ‘the world lieth in wickedness,’ no loyal subject of the Divine King can count it his home. Even here, indeed, all whose names are ‘written in the Lamb’s book of life,’ the register of the citizens of heaven, enjoy, in a measure calling for devoutest gratitude, many privileges of their citizenship. But, as the citizen of Rome, while proud of the dignity and glad of the safety his position gave him anywhere in the civilised world, yet thought of the metropolis itself as the place where alone he could have the full benefit of all the powers and immunities of ‘this freedom,—with similar feelings the Christian regards heaven. There the citizens ‘see their King in His beauty,’ and experi-

ence the full blessedness and glory of their relations to Him, and to each other.

This particular representation of the believer's relation to heaven suggests to him with much liveliness the thought of the *congenial society* which awaits him there. If you or I were called by business to be much abroad, among people of a foreign tongue, foreign manners, foreign feelings, our hearts—if they be true, honest, manly hearts—would turn often with strong longing to our own country, our own city; primarily because here is our home, our dear family circle; but to some extent also, because here all the people around us, simply as our countrymen, our townsmen, brought up under similar influences with ourselves, have on many matters a community of sentiment with us which we should seek in vain elsewhere. Now, when a member of the heavenly commonwealth looks out from earth towards his own glorious land, the range of his very warmest and tenderest thoughts of congenial society there—his expectation of the delights of the *home* circle—extends to all within the gates of pearl; for ‘fellow-citizens with the saints’ is but another description of ‘the household of God,’ children of one Father, and thus all brethren.

In this world, a Christian, however situated,—even if his dwelling be in the midst of a great community,—is, in large measure, a solitary man. To some of my younger hearers this may appear a strange statement. But, my young friends, if God spare you long, and the course of life lead you through the ordinary experiences of men, you will by and by know that loneliness is mainly a matter of the heart, and may be more felt in a crowd than on a wild Highland moor. To many a man no wilderness could be so dreary, no desert so stony-hearted, as a large city. To gaze on the flood of busy life which surges along a leading thoroughfare, and, as no doubt in every great city there are not a few who do, to feel oneself isolated in spirit from all the throng,—to know that no heart in all the city beats lovingly for us, that no joy there is

increased by our presence, or would be even for a moment interrupted by our absence or our death,—this is loneliness indeed. Now I do not say that the position of Christians generally, while they remain on earth, is altogether like this. We have believing friends near us, and many of us are linked with such by ties which permit frequent and delightful fellowship. Blessed be God for these great mercies ! Yet, at the same time, it is true that every spiritually-minded person often feels himself alone. The citizen of heaven is in a foreign land here, and cannot escape the difficulties and trials which naturally connect themselves with life in a foreign land. Taught by divine grace to be in heart not *of* the world, we yet necessarily live *in* it, and are compelled to associate with many who have no sympathy with us in the warmest affections and most ardent yearnings of our souls,—to whom, indeed, the very language of vital religion is utterly strange. Among Christians themselves, too, there are many things,—dissimilarities of natural temperament, social influences of various kinds, unhappy tendencies to exaggerate the importance of minor differences of opinion, and the like,—which make full, joyous, trustful, loving brotherhood and sympathy a rare flower even in the garden of the church. Even at his best estate, the pilgrim Zionward finds that he is ‘wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way.’

But in our own heavenly land, fellow-Christians, there are none but friends. Jarrings, and rivalries, and alienations, have no place there. The community of interests among all the citizens is perfect. There God reveals Himself to His people in modes and in a measure of which in our present state we cannot even form any conception,—assured only that our hearts shall be ravished with the view of His glory. Jesus, ‘whom, having not seen, we love,’ dwells among His people there, and admits them to closest and most endearing intercourse and fellowship. They ‘walk with Him in white ;’ they ‘sit with Him in His throne.’ Angels, too, will be our sweet

associates. They who rejoiced over us, when we were repenting sinners, will rejoice with us at our entrance into glory. They who delight to be our 'ministering spirits' here, will delight to be our companions yonder. There we shall meet again, and enjoy intimate communion with all the children of God whom we have known and loved below,—our many dear and precious friends in Christ, with whom 'we took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company.' The Christian parent or child, husband or wife, brother or sister, over whose deathbed we hung in anguish,—whose removal seemed to quench the light of our household happiness,—we shall see them and dwell with them there. Many too we shall find there, and in their friendship find unmingled pleasure, between whom and us on earth their sin or ours had introduced coldness and distrust. Paul and Barnabas have no sharp contendings yonder. Luther and Zuingli dwell there in unity,—for they 'dwell in God,' and 'God is love.' All the good of every age and clime—freed from everything which, while they lived on earth, was fitted to avert confidence or arouse dislike, and clothed with every holy beauty which can make friendship sweet and helpful,—these, with the cherubim and the seraphim, are the inhabitants of the city of God, rejoicing ever in the sunshine of their Divine King's complacent smile.

The thought of the *perfect security* enjoyed by the saints above, is another very delightful one, which most naturally rises in a Christian's mind, when thinking of heaven as a city, or organized commonwealth, of which he is a citizen.

In this happy country of Britain, where, through God's goodness, we have learned to honour our laws, and thus for many generations, whilst enjoying the utmost personal freedom compatible with the general wellbeing, have possessed the inestimable blessing of a strong executive government, we seldom think of the greatness of the privilege of security which thereby we have as citizens. Through the completeness of it, and, in consequence, our want of acquaintance practically with any-

thing else, we fail to notice it, or adequately to prize it. But to a traveller, or to any peace-loving inhabitant, in almost any part of Africa, or of Central or Western Asia, or in the hill districts of Greece or of Spain, one of the most prominent of all longings is for a power that will give safety to person and property ; and the most pleasant thought connected with *cities*, where alone in those regions anything of the advantages of efficient government is obtained, is that of security. Now, though our earth is a province of the dominions of God, it is in rebellion ; and thus practically the loyal subjects of the King here find themselves in a land of anarchy. We cannot feel at ease. Every bush may hide a lurking foe. A Roman citizen, journeying in remote barbarous or semi-barbarous countries, which were nominally under the sway of his emperor, might sometimes by his very citizenship, the dignity of which he was so proud, and which elsewhere gave him so many immunities, be brought into peril,—if discontent with the distant government prevailed around him. So with a citizen of heaven placed among the sinners of the earth, and the ‘principalities and powers of darkness’ which have much sway on the earth. To mislead him, to injure him, to lower his spiritual tone, seems to them something of a victory over his country and his King.

But the name of ‘the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem,’ brings with it the thought of perfect freedom from danger, perfect rest from anxiety. ‘They that hurt and destroy’ can never enter there. The great adversary, who so often, out here in the wilderness, proves that he has power to assail us—so often, alas ! with no little success,—cannot set foot in heaven. He cast himself down thence long ago,—never to return. The seductions of the world and the flesh, which here, like wild beasts, lie in wait for us at our tent-doors, crouching for the spring, dare not draw near the holy city. As Satan, ‘the prince of this world,’ has no entrance yonder, so neither can anything enter fitted to serve his ends. There we shall sing with a fulness of meaning unapproached below, ‘Blessed be the Lord,

who hath not given our souls for a prey. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.'

Knowing themselves to have so glorious a 'citizenship,' but being for the present in a strange land, believers are sustained by a 'blessed hope.' To this the apostle goes on to direct the attention of his readers. 'Our citizenship is in heaven,—*from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*,'—or rather, 'from whence we'—sharply contrasted here with those before mentioned, 'whose end is destruction'—'look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

The second coming of Christ, His advent to raise the dead and judge the world, is always exhibited in Scripture as for every wise soul the supremely influential fact of the future, and as the object of the most ardent longings of the Christian heart. The great spur to energetic service of God is the thought that 'when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then we also shall appear with Him in glory.' The great support in trouble is the consideration that, 'when His glory shall be revealed, we shall be glad also with exceeding joy.' Conversion is 'turning to God, to serve Him, and to wait for His Son from heaven;' and Christians are naturally described, therefore, as persons who 'love the appearing of the Lord.'

By any one who considers the subject, it can hardly be doubted that this grand event holds a far less prominent position in the thoughts of most Christians in our day than it did in those of the apostles, and, as is evident from the tone of their writings, they desired that it should do in those of their readers. Is this because our affection for the Saviour is less lively,—because we have a less intense longing to be with Him? Whatever the reason, the fact, I think, is certain. In the mind of the modern church, as exhibited in sermons and religious literature, the death of the individual has, to a great extent, taken the place which in the church of the first days was occupied by the Lord's personal advent. Now, however much it

may seem to us that this is practically the same thing,—and however influential the thought of death will assuredly be on all who look it fairly in the face,—yet is it not reasonable to suppose that our religious life must suffer as really, though not to the same degree, by altering the relative prominence given to the articles of our faith in Scripture, as by believing positive error? No truth can exert on the mind and heart exactly the same influence as another. Now it seems plain that the Divine Spirit would have Christians to keep before their souls the day with which for them no ideas can be connected but those of happiness,—the day when the Redeemer shall appear in glory, and all His redeemed ones, gathered together, shall be perfectly, publicly, and simultaneously glorified with Him. If, then, the place of prominence in a believer's mind, which should be held by this 'blessed hope,' be occupied by the time of his own death,—a time, considered simply in itself, not attractive but repulsive, round which, even for those who fully know that the sting has been taken away, some gloom will hang, and which introduces into a blessedness, ineffable indeed, yet but preparatory to that which remains to be revealed,—this substitution cannot but in various ways have an injurious effect. Its influence can hardly but strengthen the tendency, of which it seems to be itself in some measure an expression, to gather in the soul's thoughts and yearnings round herself, instead of sending them out fully, joyously, lovingly, to the Saviour. It can scarcely be questioned, I think, that the doctrines of pre-millennialism—seriously erroneous doctrines, as it appears to me—have obtained their present wide acceptance mainly through a natural and extreme reaction, in the minds of Christians of an ardent and affectionate temperament, from the tone of thinking and feeling which has put the Lord's glorious appearing so far out of view. And the best thing one can desire, in regard to the controversy which the pre-millennialists have stirred up, is that it may lead the church generally to give the great fact of the future its primitive and proper place in their contemplations and hopes.

In the passage before us, the apostle, in speaking of the hope of the Saviour's coming, turns the thoughts of his readers specially to the change which His love and power will then effect on the *bodies* of believers. This, as has been already mentioned, and briefly illustrated, is obviously to show the sin and folly of those 'whose god was their belly,' and 'whose glory was in their shame.'

The expression employed in the Authorized Version, '*our vile body*',—that is, according to the primitive meaning of the word 'vile,' 'our body of little value,' as in Jeremiah we read of 'vile figs,' and in James of 'vile raiment,'—is not by any means a happy one, being both inaccurate as a translation and in itself untrue. However lamentably often made to minister to moral worthlessness, the body is in itself most precious, as an instrument admirably adapted for the service of God. The most literal rendering of the apostle's words in this clause is the best,—'*who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory.*' Our present body belongs to 'our humiliation,' and is in various respects its exponent. In its tendencies to nourish certain forms of immoral desire, and in its infirmities, diseases, and mortality, it bears clear testimony to the *fall* of man. But the Lord, who has taken upon Him our nature, not for a time only, but for ever, and whose glory accordingly is manifested in heaven under a human form, will, at His coming, change the bodies of His people, fashioning them like unto that 'body of glory.' Of its sublime beauty the three chosen disciples had an anticipatory glimpse, when the Lord 'was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment became shining, white as the light.' Fashioned like unto this body, dear friends, will be yours and mine, if we are truly His brethren; 'for whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be'—as regards their *whole* being—'conformed to the image of His Son.' 'We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' 'Behold, what manner of love!'

With such a prospect as this before us, we may surely well say, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! ’

Heathen philosophers could reach some hope of a future life; but in their views of that life the body had no place. It seemed to them only a temporary and somewhat degrading companion of the soul. But Scripture assumes throughout that the body is no mere drapery,—no mere accidental associate of what thinks and feels,—but essential to complete humanity. It was only the *body* of Jesus that for three days lay in Joseph’s tomb; yet the angel said to the women, ‘Come, see the place where the *Lord* lay.’ Plainly then, in some true sense, that sacred body was the Lord Jesus. And when He arose in His complete humanity, soul and body, a pledge was therein given that His redeemed too shall in their complete nature one day stand before God; for not partially, but wholly, according to the covenant of love, we are united to our Lord, and share His glory. Wherefore, ‘if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.’ The soul will recognise the old associate of its earthly joys and sorrows. There will be in the risen man a full sense of personal identity, as regards the whole nature, with him who once ‘yielded his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin,’ but was led by the Divine Spirit to ‘yield them as instruments of righteousness unto God.’ Yet how different the whole man will be,—how gloriously different! The body, ‘sown in corruption,’ shall be ‘raised in incorruption,’—free from pain and disease, from decay and mortality. ‘The eyes of Jacob shall no more be dim for age; Mephibosheth shall not be lame in his feet; nor shall the senses of Barzillai be dull and languid;’<sup>1</sup> for alike age and infirmity are unknown to the ‘children of the resurrection.’ ‘Sown in the dishonour’ of uncomeliness, it shall be ‘raised in

<sup>1</sup> Boston.

the glory' of perfect and unending beauty, 'fashioned like unto the body of Christ's glory.' 'Sown in weakness,' it shall be 'raised in power'—power to serve the Lord unwearingly day and night in His temple, and to bear the 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' 'Sown a natural body'—a body fitted for the uses of earth,—it shall be 'raised a spiritual body'—a dwelling suited in everything for the holy and happy spirit, an instrument exquisitely adapted for prosecuting the pursuits of heaven, and ministering to its pure and exalted joys.

To our human reason there are difficulties, very serious difficulties, in the doctrine of resurrection. The body laid in the grave decays, and its elements enter into new organisms, which in their turn perish and nourish others. Thus, in the course of the generations, the same elements may, to some extent, have entered into the composition of many human bodies. Whence then shall come each body complete? Yet is such a difficulty greater than those which meet us in the facts of our present life? I know, from the clear demonstrations of science, that not a particle of my present bodily frame was in the body I had as a child; but I know at the same time as certainly, from the testimony of consciousness, that I, the man, am the same who was then a child, and that for the deeds done in the body then I still am responsible. Shall I deem it a greatly more wonderful thing than this, that, through the power of God, I shall stand at His bar at the last in a body which, fully and satisfactorily, I shall recognise as my own? In regard to the one matter, I believe the testimony of science and consciousness, though seeing only very dimly into the *how*. In regard to the other, should I hesitate to believe the testimony of God in His word?—or, compassed as I am by mystery in this present life, would it not be most irrational in me to allege the existence in the Bible of statements which human philosophy cannot see all round and all through, as a ground of doubt whether the testimony of God really be found in the Bible?

However great the difficulties may be, an answer completely

satisfactory to every Christian mind is made to all objections and doubts on this head, in the apostle's last words in the passage before us,—‘according to the working whereby He is able’—or, ‘according to the working of His power’—‘even to subdue all things unto Himself.’ Christ, as Mediator, has received of His Father ‘all power in heaven and in earth,’ and this ‘to put all enemies under His feet.’ The full belief of this belongs to the basis of reasonable peace, in our thoughts of our relation to God; for our salvation is solely ‘in Christ,’ and if there be any foe of His and ours whom He cannot conquer, then by that foe we may be utterly and for ever oppressed. But we are left in no uncertainty on this matter of transcendent moment, Christian brethren. The Son of God can fail in nothing; and as He ‘was manifested to destroy the works of the devil,’ those works shall be destroyed,—every one of them. Among those works is death,—and Christ’s people shall certainly rejoice, at the last, in the complete emancipation of every element of their nature from the thraldom of this tyrant. ‘When Christ shall have put down all rule and all authority and power—for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet,—the last enemy shall be destroyed, death.’ ‘For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.’

Every Christian sees in his own spiritual life—in the reasonable peace, and the holy longings, of a soul which by nature was ‘dead in trespasses and sins’—evidence of the victory of his Saviour over death; and finds his faith thus ever stronger to anticipate with full confidence the day of complete redemption—entire ‘deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ It is plain to him that, ‘according to the working,’ already manifested, ‘of Christ’s power to subdue’ his hard heart ‘to Himself,’ *nothing* is im-

possible to his Lord. The resurrection of the body is, after all, but a little thing compared with the resurrection of a dead soul. Those who even here, as with trustfulness and love they 'behold the glory of their Lord,' 'are changed' spiritually 'into the same image, from glory to glory,' need have no difficulty in expecting a time when 'the body of their humiliation' too shall be 'fashioned like unto the body of His glory,' —and thus in fulness, 'as they have borne the image of the earthly, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly.'

## XXV.

## STEDFASTNESS IN THE LORD.

‘Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.’—PHIL. iv. 1.

THE division into chapters has not been very happily made here. The ‘*therefore*’ which introduces the verse before us, shows plainly that the injunction, ‘Stand fast in the Lord,’ is closely connected with what precedes, as the practical application. It would consequently have been better had this verse, at least, been attached to the 3rd chapter. Again, the 2nd and 3rd verses appear to be a kind of appendix to the 1st, applying the general rule there given to a special case. With them ends the important section of the Epistle which began with the 2nd verse of the 3rd chapter, and which is, in its nature, something of an episode, or digression. In the 4th verse, the apostle returns to the point he had reached in the 1st verse of the previous chapter, and reiterates the precept there given. With this reiteration the 4th chapter would most naturally have begun.

‘*Therefore*’ has been held by some to point back over the whole of the episodical section of which I have spoken. In this case, the apostle’s meaning would be,—‘You are exposed, on the one hand, to the influence of some active and plausible teachers, who would have you substitute entirely, or partially, faith in ritual and your own works for faith in Christ,—on the other hand, to that of persons who tell you that, because we are saved through faith in Christ alone, a holy life is a matter of no account. See to it, therefore, that

ye “*stand fast in the Lord*,”—maintaining, by prayer and firm resistance to self-righteousness, a spirit of absolute childlike dependence on Him ; and proving that you are in Him, and understand the nature of His salvation and of saving faith, by living a godly life.’ This reference to both parts of the previous discussion would, I think, have been the most natural, but for the word ‘*so*,’—‘*So stand fast in the Lord*.’ This particle seems to connect the injunction specially with the immediately preceding verses, and thus with the second part of the discussion ; for the force of the ‘*so*’ is, apparently, ‘as becomes persons who are citizens of heaven, and entertain such glorious hopes.’ Whilst the apostle, therefore, glances, no doubt, at the whole ground occupied in his previous observations, yet, in enjoining the Philippians to ‘*stand fast in the Lord*,’ the thought of *holiness* is mainly in his mind. ‘See to it that, through thoughtfulness, and vigilance, and prayer, your character be such as, with growing clearness, to evince spiritual union with the Lord.’

The union between Christ and His people, to which the phrase ‘*in the Lord*’ points, and which is the spring of all the Christian’s joys and hopes, is of a twofold character, legal and spiritual. By His Father’s appointment, and His own ineffable love, Jesus was so identified, as it were, with those He came to save, as to be treated, not according to His deserts, but theirs,—wounded and bruised, subjected to grief and to death, in their room ; whilst they are so identified with Him, as to be treated, not according to their own deserts, but to His,—introduced, for His sake, into glory, and honour, and eternal life. This legal union is the fundamental blessing of the Christian salvation. All the others rest upon it. The spiritual union is what may be described as the community of spiritual life —of thought, and affection, and enjoyment—existing between Christ and believers. This is produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit, through the operation on our souls of that same faith of the gospel by which, according to God’s ap-

pointment, we enter actually into the legal relation of union to our Saviour—or, in other words, are justified. Christ's mind and heart are unfolded in His word; and, by the constitution of our moral nature, become our mind and heart, in proportion as we understand and believe the word. The believer, in so far as he is a believer, has the same views and the same desires as his Lord. ‘He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.’ ‘If any man be in Christ,’ says the apostle in another place, ‘he is a new creature.’ The meaning of his exhortation in the verse now before us then, I apprehend, is, ‘Let the fact that you are new creatures be so indisputable as to prove that you are in Christ,—let the flower bloom so beautifully as to leave no room for doubt regarding the existence and healthy vigour of the unseen root.’

How the life of Christ in a true believer, through the spiritual union, will reveal itself, the candid reader of Scripture can be in no doubt. The new man feels himself sweetly constrained to ‘cease to do evil,’ and to ‘learn to do well.’ He is impelled by the mercies of God to ‘present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God;’ feeling this to be ‘reasonable service,’ and that anything else, on the part of a being like man, who has a body, and lives an outward life, would be an insult to the Father of our spirits and the Former of our bodies. He is no longer ‘conformed to this world,’ but ‘transformed by the renewing of his mind.’ He loves his fellow-men, and cares for them with an interest which regards eternity as well as time. Honour and manliness, courtesy and gentleness, in all his dealings, reveal a heart made generous and tender through the knowledge of the love of Christ. His life, in all its relations, is regulated by reverence and affection for his Saviour; so that he is a legible ‘epistle of Christ,’ telling all around who do not wilfully close their eyes, of the grace and power of his Lord. By such a life as this—a holy Christlike life, at home and with strangers, in business and in recreation, with servants and with superiors—a man is shown

to be 'in Christ.' It is true that the most spiritually-minded Christian, so long as he is on earth, will fall far short of perfectly exhibiting the Christian character; but no man who does not earnestly and prayerfully *aim* at exhibiting it perfectly, has any right to believe himself to be 'in Christ.' And, the nearer the approach made, the clearer and more comforting always is the evidence. 'Stand fast in the Lord,' then, dear brethren. Let no temptation attract you—let no persecution daunt you—from that consistent beauty and energy of godliness by which faith approves itself sincere.

Strong arguments in support of the apostle's injunction are found in the statements he has made in the verses immediately preceding,—to which he directs attention by his '*therefore*' and '*so*.' 'Seeing that, as Christians, your position is one of such dignity, and your hopes are so lofty,—stand fast in the Lord with the energy and persistency befitting persons who regard themselves as citizens of heaven, and look for their Saviour to introduce them into the full blessedness and glory of His kingdom.' The citizenship of heaven carries responsibility with it. A member of an illustrious community may reasonably be expected to guard the honour of the community,—to increase the respect felt for it, if this be in his power, and, at least, to abstain from everything which will reflect discredit upon it. A nobleman, even if he be in spirit a mean man, is strongly bound by his position to what the traditions of his class call honourable conduct. When a native of Great Britain, or of any other country distinguished by Christian civilisation, travels in a foreign land, he should feel—and, in innumerable instances, no doubt, does feel—that the reputation of his country is, to some extent, in his keeping; and the sense of this will co-operate with other influences to restrain him from what is mean or cruel. Now the citizens of heaven have the most illustrious dignity which can be enjoyed by any creature; and this dignity has been bestowed upon them, not from any desert on their part, but simply through

the kindness of their King. Ardent gratitude for His goodness, then, dear brethren, should certainly lead us to be vigilant in regard to our character, that thus glory may accrue to Him. The men of the world, the strangers to Christ, know that we claim to hold close relations with heaven. Let them be compelled to acknowledge that there is in us a purity and nobleness of sentiment and life, such as mere earthly influences are insufficient to produce. The life of every Christian should be like the fragrant breeze which, in tropical waters, tells the mariner, while still far out at sea, that the land from which it comes is a land of pleasant forests and gardens, where ‘the spices flow forth.’ It should testify, truthfully and clearly, of the sweetness and grace of heaven.

The apostle has drawn particular attention to the fact that Christians expect the Saviour, at His appearing, to change the ‘*bodies of their humiliation*’—the bodies in which, at the present, fleshly lusts exert such power, and which are subject to pain, and disease, and death,—and to make them like the body in which His own mediatorial glory manifests itself. This expectation should give a deep sense of responsibility for our treatment of the body, as an instrument of our moral nature. My body is not loosely or temporarily connected with me. As I am an embodied thinking being now, so I shall be an embodied thinking being throughout eternity. The lips, then, which are to sing the high praises of our King above,—the limbs which are to be employed in serving Him day and night in His temple,—dare we use these as the instruments of frivolity or vice? ‘What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you,—which ye have of God; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price? Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’

There can be no doubt that, in all by whom such views regarding their present position, and such expectations regarding their future, as the apostle here speaks of, are intelli-

gently and vividly cherished, these views and hopes are fitted to exert very strongly an elevating influence on the heart and life. ‘Every man that hath this hope in Christ,’ says the Apostle John, ‘purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure.’ In the measure of its liveliness, the hope holds up before the soul a noble ideal of character. Any man who really and intelligently regards himself as a citizen of heaven, and hopes for holy blessedness—the full enjoyment of this citizenship—after death, must often have before his mind heaven, and the moral features of its inhabitants. In common life, the life of buying and selling, of strifes and frivolities, men and women naturally form low conceptions both of what they may be and of what they should be. A character of fair outward respectability, but destitute of all real nobleness—of all high and generous aims,—is very apt to appear sufficient. To all who are unregenerate, however much there may be in their spirit which is beautiful and amiable, still something far below the highest capabilities of man always does seem sufficient. But as the spear of Milton’s Ithuriel had the power, by its touch, of making evil spirits stand forth in their native blackness and uncomeliness, however skilfully they had disguised themselves as angels of light; so the Christian’s sense of his relation to heaven reveals to his heart the essential vanity and despicableness of any form of life which is alien from the will of God. The application of the touchstone question, ‘How would such conduct answer in heaven? How would such conduct become one who hopes for heaven, and deems himself a citizen of heaven?’—this shows things as they are.

The ideal of character which in this way is brought and kept before the believer, is no mere abstraction, but is embodied in his Lord. He knows that the destiny of the Christian is to be, in the fullest sense of the wonderful words, up to the highest capabilities of humanity ‘conformed to the image of God’s Son.’ His expectation is that, when the Saviour shall appear ‘to change the body of our humiliation,

that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory,' the soul then re-united to the body will be a perfectly Christlike soul. As, through the wondrous art of the photographer, the light of the sun of our firmament can print an image of beauty on paper which was once but filthy rags, so the light of the glory of grace will one day imprint the image of Jesus on the hearts of all His redeemed ones,—hearts which, by nature, were 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' Now what the 'open vision' of the 'Altogether Lovely' will effect perfectly in that day when 'we shall see Him as He is,' the partial vision enjoyed in the present state accomplishes in some degree. Here, on earth, with love, and confidence, and hope, 'beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

The belief in our being citizens of heaven through faith in Christ Jesus, and the expectation of being with Him and like Him for ever there, are, beyond question, eminently fitted, through the blessing of the Holy Ghost, to beautify and ennoble the character. Holiness is the proper fruit of intelligent Christian hope. 'Therefore, my brethren, so stand fast in the Lord.'

This most important injunction is sent home to the hearts of the Philippians with peculiar power by the apostle's tender words of endearment. He begins the verse by calling them his '*brethren dearly beloved and longed for*,' his '*joy and crown*,' and he ends it, lingering most touchingly on the thought of his delight in them, with the repetition of his first epithet, '*my dearly beloved*.' It is as if he said, 'By our brotherhood in Christ—by the ardent love I have for you, and have in many ways proved—by my joy and glorying in your Christian stedfastness and beauty hitherto—and by the hopes I have been led to cherish of rejoicing and glorying in you in the day of Christ,—I beseech you to stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.' You feel that pleading of this kind, falling on the ears of men who knew how true Paul was in all things, could not fail to be profoundly influential.

'*My joy and crown*' exhibits a thought very familiar to the apostle. The '*crown*' is not here the diadem of royalty, but the garland of victory. He has in his mind, as so often, the famous public athletic games of the Greeks,—which the diligent training, and the strenuous and persevering exertion, needed to gain the '*corruptible crown*' of laurel, and the intensity of joy felt by the victors, rendered an admirable illustration of the Christian life, whether as regards the spiritual progress of the believer himself, or his work for the salvation of others. The apostle believed that he would be enabled to '*rejoice in the day of Christ, that he had not run in vain*' as a minister of Christ. He believed that the Lord would place around his brow an unfading garland of honour, of which each soul that had been quickened, comforted, strengthened by him, would be, so to speak, a spray or leaf,—'for,' says he to the Thessalonians, '*what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy.*' And even *now*, from his confidence in the Christian character of the Philippians, as of many of his other converts, and his vivid anticipation of their welcome by the Master on the great day, he felt them to be '*his joy and crown.*' In Nero's prison, aged, worn with trouble, manacled, uncertain whether he might not soon be led forth to death by the executioner, he knew himself to be yet in truth, as a successful minister of Christ, a conqueror, wreathed with amaranth. The emperor in his palace was, in heart, weary and wretched. The prisoner was restful and happy. The glitter of the emperor's power and grandeur would very soon pass away, and be as a dream. His prisoner was already invested with a glory which, recognised in this world only by those whose eyes had been opened to discern spiritual things, should yet be manifested before the universe,—for '*they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.*'

## XXVI.

## BROTHERLY-KINDNESS.

‘I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life.’—PHIL. iv. 2, 3.

In these verses we have an interesting glimpse of several prominent members of the Philippian church, and of the apostle’s wise and affectionate dealings with them as their spiritual father. Paul had learned, probably from Epaphroditus, that between Euodias (or rather, more exactly, Euodia) and Syntyche, two of the female members, there had unhappily arisen a quarrel or coldness, which, as we may infer from his reference to it in this public letter, had become well known among the brethren, and had in various ways done harm to the good cause. They were both excellent women, and, as the apostle remembered, had shown their zeal in former years, when he himself was labouring for Christ in their city, by working diligently along with him. The position of influence in the church which we may reasonably suppose them to have thus acquired, made their dissension peculiarly painful to the right-minded. At the same time, it gave them a peculiarly strong claim on the friendly offices of their brethren, to bring about a reconciliation. Accordingly, the apostle not merely appeals to Euodia and Syntyche themselves to return to sisterly affection, but also requests a brother in the church, whom he calls ‘true yoke-fellow,’ to do what may be in his power to remove difficulties out of their way.

It is not necessary to seek for any close connection of thought between this reference to the quarrel of these good women and the preceding context. A familiar letter allows much freedom in passing from one subject to another; and towards the close, in particular, observations of an isolated kind are to be looked for. In the case before us, however, it appears to me most natural to regard these verses as somewhat closely connected with that immediately preceding. The apostle has called on his dear children at Philippi to 'stand fast in the Lord.' Whilst he writes the words, he feels his heart burdened with the thought of the dissension between his two friends, as a painful illustration of the way in which believers may fail to 'stand fast in the Lord' clearly and firmly; and thus, really, though not formally put as such, we have in the verses before us a practical application to a special case of the general counsel given in the 1st verse.

The passage, then, suggests to our minds the transcendent importance of the grace of love, as the grand evidence of our 'standing fast in the Lord.' 'God is love.' To be without love, therefore, is to be without God; whilst 'he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.' Love is the chief purifying and ennobling element of Christian feeling. Under its genial influence, faith and hope—spiritual wisdom and strength and joy—flourish in luxuriance. This fact is strikingly brought out in a prayer of Paul for the other great Macedonian church, that of Thessalonica,—'The Lord make you to *increase and abound in love* one towards another, and towards all men, *to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness.*'

To the importance of 'brotherly-kindness,' the love which it becomes Christians to cherish 'especially to them who are of the household of faith,' the reference made by the apostle to the relations between Euodia and Syntyche draws our attention particularly. Christians are, in a sense altogether peculiar, the family of God. From the far country of sin, into which as prodigals we had wandered, our Father's gracious influence

has brought us home ; and now, not merely through the fact of our being His moral creatures, but by the new spiritual birth, we are ‘sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.’ All His ‘sons and daughters’ are our brothers and sisters ; and ‘every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him.’ Discerning in all our fellow-believers something of those qualities which, as they appear in infinite perfection in the character of our common Father, have won for Him our supreme love ; we find ourselves drawn to them by common sympathies and interests, with respect to the matters which have come to be felt by us as of greatest moment. Wherever there is true love to God, next to it, and necessarily resulting from it, stands love to the godly. This affection of complacency and delight is an image of that ineffable love which reigns between the Father and His Eternal Son ; for the prayer of Him whom the Father heareth always was, ‘that they may be one, as we are, I in them and Thou in Me,—that they may be made perfect in one.’ Surely, my brethren, when we think of this wondrous ideal of brotherly love, and look abroad on the Christian church as it is, we have much reason to hide our faces in shame ; for, ‘whereas there is among us envying and strife and divisions, are we not carnal, and walk as men ?’

The *law* of brotherly love is not far to seek, nor difficult to bear in mind. ‘A new commandment I give unto you,’ said the Lord, in the last tender hour of communion with His sorrowing disciples, ‘that ye love one another as I have loved you.’ This commandment was old in its general principle, old as the first inculcation of religious duty ; but it was ‘new,’ sublimely new, in its example, showing with a new clearness the vastness of the breadth and the length of the love required, ‘as I have loved you,’—new, too, in the motive exhibited to enforce it, ‘because I have so loved you.’ But who is—who can be—sufficient for these things? Who can love like Him who left the bosom of His Father to dwell as a servant among sinful

men, and suffer and die for their salvation? Yet in *kind* our love may resemble His; and with such love our finite hearts may be full. The drop they contain may be kindred to the ocean of His love. The practical application of the Lord's rule by the Christian heart will always be somewhat on this wise: when the icy fingers of worldliness chill the soul, and the whisper rises, 'Have I not loved my brother enough?' answers the still small voice of conscience, 'Hast thou loved him as thy Saviour has loved thee? Hast thou done for thy brother what your common Elder Brother has done for thee?' The remembrance of the love of Christ is the only thing which can sustain brotherly love in vigorous exercise; and in exact proportion as our spirits go on to know more of the love which, in its fulness, 'passeth knowledge,' does its image on earth become brighter and truer.

To the cultivation of love to the brotherhood very peculiar importance is attached in Scripture. It is constantly set before us as the most distinct evidence of the possession of vital religion. 'We know,' says the Apostle John, 'that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.' The Master Himself tells us, 'By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.' In the early days of the church, nothing so impressed 'them that were without' as the strong mutual affection of the believers in Christ. The observers said with wonderment, 'Behold these Christians,—how they love one another!' In our time, alas! brotherly love has in many waxed cold; and, in so far as the church has thus lost its great ornament, the world has been deprived of one main quickening power. Not till the daughter of Zion arrays herself again in the 'beautiful garments' of brotherly-kindness, will she convince the world that her Lord is He whose name is love.

The ground of the dissension between Euodia and Syntyche is

not mentioned. It was possibly something altogether frivolous, for even mature Christians act sometimes like silly children. Perhaps, however, seeing that they were both active servants of Christ, the origin of the coldness was some difference of opinion with respect to the best modes of carrying on the Lord's work. In an unguarded soul, zeal often opens the door to unholy anger. When men believe themselves to be 'doing a great work,' their enthusiasm tends to produce impatience. When thwarted, or, as they think, unreasonably hindered, their souls strike fire against the obstacles, and, tormenting themselves at the disappointment, they are apt to break out in language they will regret afterwards. To a thoughtful mind, perhaps no element in the character of Jesus more impressively shows that character to be absolutely unique, than His sublime equanimity, while prosecuting so great a work with so great enthusiasm, counting it His 'meat,' and pouring into it all the energies of His life. 'He is as serene and even in all His hindrances from foolish unreasonable men, and in all troubles of every kind, as if He had nothing great on hand to do. He is clothed with an armour of holy patience, through which no weapon can pierce. He is never disheartened, fretted, or ruffled.'<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the ground of dissension, their wise friend Paul can have but one advice to them, with regard to their relations to each other. To the Colossians he gives it very fully, in this form: 'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long - suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye ; and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.' In the present passage, his entreaty is that his dear friends would '*be of the same mind.*' This is not by any means an injunction to have the same views on everything. Differences of tempera-

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell.

ment, training, intellectual power, acquirements, and surroundings, might render that, or even any very close approach to it, impossible. Paul's favourite phrase, which follows, explains the thought. His wish is that they should 'be of the same mind *in the Lord*.' They are to 'endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,'—to remember the transcendent importance of the matters in which their views accord,—to consider how utterly unsuited quarrelling or coldness is for those who are united '*in the Lord*',—and therefore, with regard to any matter on which they fail to see eye to eye, to 'agree to differ,' and follow out their separate views lovingly and with mutual helpfulness. The praise which Christian lives send up to heaven cannot be a song in unison; but it may be and should be a song in harmony, which is far richer and deeper than unison.

How gloriously catholic and tolerant is the love to us of our divine Elder Brother! Glance at His relations to those He gathered round Him during His earthly life. There were many varieties of temperament, many different degrees of capacity for clearness and breadth of view, many varied measures of natural loveableness, among His followers; but for all of them—for Peter, the frank, ardent, impulsive; for John, the meditative, poetical, spiritual; for Thomas, the slow-minded, moody, difficult to influence but immediately through the senses; for Martha, the bustling and practical; for Mary, whose one desire was to sit at her Lord's feet and drink in His words; for all, differing in everything except love to Him, His heart had ample room. He loved them all. You and I too should embrace with warm brotherly affection all who give evidence of loving our common Lord, whatever differences there may be in many things. But imperfectly sanctified humanity is deplorably prone to sectarianism. Hardly had the nations which had sat in darkness begun to see the great light, before rancorous dissensions saddened the hearts of the apostles and primitive teachers,—nay, before they found their own names

employed as instruments to bring dishonour on the name of their Lord, and ‘Paul,’ ‘Apollos,’ and ‘Cephas,’ rung out as the gathering cry for the battle of sects. Even Christianized human nature loves to be angry, when with any plausibility it can flatter itself that it ‘does well to be angry,’ and is ‘jealous for the Lord God of hosts.’ But the spirit of Christ is eminently an unsectarian spirit. It is natural and not wrong that the love of a believer’s heart should go forth with special intensity to those of his brethren whose souls are most kindred with his own. Jesus, though He loved all His ‘little children,’ had yet a specially tender love for Peter and James and John; and even of this inner circle there is one who is called with emphasis ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’ But there is something far wrong, when any Christian’s love is hedged in by denominational bounds or ecclesiastical forms, by points of criticism or peculiarities of temperament. For all who ‘love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,’ our hearts should have room, as His has. And the nearer that, by the gracious influence of His Spirit, we are brought to Him, the nearer continually we shall be brought to each other.

No attentive reader can fail to be struck with the *mode* in which Paul intervenes between Euodia and Syntyche, to set them at one again. For one thing, he makes not the slightest reference to the particular cause of dissension. In a vast proportion of cases, attempts at reconciliation will be more likely to succeed, if the original matter of difference be allowed to sleep among dead things, than if it be roused to life and subjected anew to examination. Again,—from his apostolic authority, and the nature of his relation to the church of Philippi in particular, Paul might most reasonably have been ‘much bold in Christ to *enjoin* them that which was convenient; yet for love’s sake he rather *beseeches* them.’ He beseeches them *separately* too. Possibly the one was more to blame than the other for the origin or the continuance of the coldness; but the apostle

treats them with exactly the same consideration : ‘*I beseech Euodia,—and I beseech Syntyche.*’

In the 3rd verse he goes on to ask a friend of influence among the believers at Philippi to help the ladies he has been pleading with to come to a reconciliation. ‘*And*’ (or, according to a better supported reading, *yea*, introducing another request which, yet more clearly than the preceding, shows Paul’s earnestness of feeling with regard to the matter in hand) ‘*I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel.*’ The rendering of our translators here is, if not inaccurate, at least likely to mislead. It seems to mean, ‘Help my female fellow-labourers’ generally, whereas the apostle’s request really refers simply to Euodia and Syntyche, and to his wish that their coldness should be brought to an end,—‘Help them’—to be of the same mind in the Lord,—‘seeing that they laboured with me in the gospel.’

It thus appears that women were zealous and efficient workers for Christ at Philippi. These two ladies had ‘*laboured with Paul*’—‘shared with him in his strenuous contendings,’ for the primary reference of the original word is to athletic contests—‘*in the gospel.*’ This fact accords exactly—and the obviously undesigned coincidence is very interesting—with the account given in Acts of the first visit of the apostle to Philippi, when, as you remember, the gospel was first proclaimed to, and accepted by, women. ‘On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made, and sat down and spake unto the *women* which resorted thither; and a certain woman named Lydia heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there,—and she constrained us’ (Acts xvi. 13–15). Lydia, Euodia, and Syntyche, appear to have been representatives of a very large class of women in the early church, who

not merely for themselves ‘chose that good part which should not be taken away from them,’ but also ‘did what they could’ to bring others to choose it. Again and again we find special mention made of such,—for example, ‘Mary, who bestowed much labour on us ;’ ‘ Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord ;’ ‘the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.’ It was obviously felt by the believers generally, that Christ’s call was not simply to the enjoyment of peace in Him, but to exertion, as in His providence He gave opportunity, for the extension of His kingdom ; and that women had their sphere of Christian work, which they could fill better than men. In all society they of necessity exercise an extensive and powerful influence; they have peculiarly free access to their own sex; and for ministrations in time of trouble, when the heart is frequently most open to religious impressions, they have a special aptitude. To do efficient service to the Master, it is not, as a rule, either necessary or desirable that women should step out of the domestic and quiet social spheres within which it is plainly the will of God that they should ordinarily move. Any mode of action which brushes off the beautiful bloom of female modesty and gentleness is not likely to commend the gospel. The wise female Christian worker will always resemble her already named, who, while ‘labouring much in the Lord,’ remained ever, for all who knew her, ‘the *beloved* Persis.’ Few features in the Christian life of our own time are more pleasing than the activity of pious women, and the sweet and beautiful womanliness with which they commonly do their work.

The friend to whom Paul addresses himself in the 3rd verse is requested by him to ‘*help*’ Euodia and Syntyche to become reconciled. The duty might be felt by these good women to be a hard one. Even if they both clearly saw the sinfulness of their dissension, and longed for the pleasant intercourse of former days, pride was apt to interpose obstacles. A thoroughly discreet friend of both, on the spot, could do not a little, in various ways, to smooth the path to unity. This is a form

of Christian work, my brethren, to which God in His providence may occasionally call you or me. None needs more delicacy of handling ; and, from consciousness of this, and a fear lest through interference the alienation be widened, and the friend who interfered brought in to share somewhat of its discomforts, there is perhaps no field of Christian love from the cultivation of which believers generally are more prone to shrink. But none, when lovingly and prayerfully tilled, yield richer fruits. It cannot but be, that on efforts to restore interrupted brotherly affection, the Saviour who said, ‘This is My commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you,’ looks down with peculiar tenderness and complacency.

Regarding the person addressed as ‘*true yoke-fellow*,’ there have been various conjectures. A common use of the original word in classical writers is in the sense of ‘spouse.’ By some interpreters, accordingly, it has been thought that the apostle here refers to his wife,—supposed by them to have been at this time, for some reason, living at Philippi, and, both from her relation to him, and her own character, a person of influence among the Christians there. This view is in no wise natural ; hardly accords, to say the least, with the grammar of the original ; and is inconsistent with Paul’s language elsewhere,—all his allusions to his own position leading us to believe either that he had never been married, or that he was a widower. Others again have thought of the husband of Euodia or Syntyche. This also seems wholly unnatural. Had such been the reference intended, the language employed would almost certainly have been more specific ; and besides, after such distinct evidence of the apostle’s determination to remain entirely impartial, as we have had in ‘I beseech Euodia,—and I beseech Syntyche,’ an appeal for aid to a person inevitably interested on the one side is utterly improbable. There can be little doubt, I think, that Paul here addresses an eminently pious and judicious member, and probably office-bearer, of the Philippian church, who, from some circumstances unknown to

us, was specially fitted to help the apostle in his endeavour to reconcile the sisters in Christ who were unhappily at variance. But in a letter superscribed ‘To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons,’ ‘true yoke-fellow’ seems a curiously indefinite way of addressing an individual member, bishop, or deacon, however prominent. This very early suggested to some interpreters the thought that perhaps *Synzygus*, or *Syzygus*, the original word rendered ‘yoke-fellow,’ was in this case a proper name, on which Paul plays with a little affectionate pleasantry,—‘true, genuine *Synzygus*,’—‘Yoke-fellow, whose character accords with thy name.’ This view seems to me highly probable. It is evident to any student of Paul’s writings in the original that he loved an occasional play upon words; and in one case at least he plays upon a proper name. ‘*Onesimus*’ means ‘profitable;’ and the apostle says to Philemon, ‘I beseech thee for my son *Onesimus*,—which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.’ The fact that *Synzygus* is not known to occur elsewhere as a proper name, presents no difficulty whatever in the way of our holding it to be such in the passage before us,—considering how small a proportion the names preserved in extant literature must bear to those which were actually in use. The word is certainly one quite likely to have been employed as a name; just as, among ourselves, we find such surnames as *Friend*, *Dear*, *Goodfellow*, *Goodman*, and the like, more or less common. The view that we have here a proper name, removes all indefiniteness from the address; gives a peculiar pointedness to the epithet ‘true’ or ‘genuine;’ and accounts perfectly for the use of this particular word *Synzygus*, or ‘yoke-fellow,’ which occurs nowhere else in Paul’s writings, or indeed in the New Testament.

The thought of the loving and efficient aid which the apostle had received in his work at Philippi from Euodia and Syntyche, brings with it pleasant memories of other helpers; and to these, most naturally, he makes now a brief reference,—‘with

*Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers.'* In the latter part of the first century there was a distinguished minister of the church in Rome, named Clement, the writer of two letters to the church of Corinth, which are still extant. With him early tradition identified the Clement mentioned here. There is nothing impossible, or improbable, in the supposition that they were the same. But the name was by no means an uncommon one.

Clement had perhaps held some kind of acknowledged precedence among the helpers of Paul in Christian work; and thus we find the others alluded to more generally, '*with my other fellow-labourers*',—as we might name a minister, and add '*with his elders*', or name the superintendent of a Sabbath school, and add '*with the teachers*'. But though not naming them, the apostle well remembered them and their earnest work, and gives his impression of them here in words signally fitted to gladden their hearts, and cheer them on to continued exertion in the Lord's service,—'*whose names are in the book of life*' Having had ample opportunities of judging of them, Paul felt convinced that their profession of faith in Christ expressed a reality,—that they had in truth '*passed from death unto life*', and were safe for ever. Their zeal and perseverance in the service of Christ proved to him that what the Lord, employing the same figure used here, had said of the seventy disciples, was true of these brethren also,—'*their names were written in heaven*' '*This honour have all the saints* ;' and earnest and patient continuance in well-doing gives *assurance* of it with growing distinctness, both to the Christian himself and to spiritual observers of his life.

By the figure of a *book*, in which the names of God's people are recorded, is plainly and most gladdeningly set before the believing heart the perfect knowledge He has of all them that are His, and thus the certainty that to every one of them His '*exceeding great and precious promises*' will be fulfilled. This image presents itself pretty frequently, both in the Old Testa-

ment and the New. The thought specially intended seems to be of a register of the citizens of the heavenly city.<sup>1</sup> This is, in the amplest sense, a ‘book of life.’ Those who are ‘written among the living in Jerusalem’ have true ‘life’ in Christ even here, while as yet afar in the wilderness. Yonder its strength, and beauty, and blessedness are enjoyed in fulness. And this enjoyment is for ever. The life is ‘*eternal* life.’ They that dwell in the city of God ‘go no more out.’ ‘Their sun shall no more go down, neither shall their moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.’

<sup>1</sup> The use of this particular image here may not improbably have been suggested to the apostle by the reference he had made a few verses before (iii. 20,—see the exposition of the first clause) to the fact that the believer’s ‘citizenship is in heaven.’

## XXVII.

## PRAYERFULNESS AND THE PEACE OF GOD.

' Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice. 5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanks giving, let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'—PHIL. iv. 4-7.

WITH this paragraph, as we have already seen, the 4th chapter ought to have commenced ; because the singularly interesting and important digression which began with the 2nd verse of the 3rd chapter, ends with the 3rd verse of the present, and the interrupted line of exhortation is resumed here. The transition occurs very naturally. The apostle has been speaking of a dissension between two honoured members of the church of Philippi, such as was calculated to cause all the brethren discomfort. In connection with this, as it seems to me, there rises in his mind again the thought of those troubles from the hatred of unbelievers, by which the Philippian Christians were tried, and on which he has touched more than once in the 1st chapter, particularly at the close. The whole tenor of the present paragraph, I think, shows that, whilst its precepts and assurances are most important and precious to the people of God under any circumstances, yet, as addressed to the first readers of the Epistle, they were specially intended to guide and cheer them as a persecuted church.

The opening injunction, '*Rejoice in the Lord,*' was fully considered on occasion of its former occurrence, in the 1st verse

of the 3rd chapter. But there are interesting additions here. ‘Rejoice alway.’ ‘Though your position may be such as to cause nature only pain, yet rise by faith above nature into joy. Even if the billows of trouble sweep wildly around, and threaten to overwhelm you, look up to Him who “sitteth upon the flood, yea, who sitteth King for ever;” who “is mightier than the mighty waves of the sea,” and in a moment can by His word bring a great calm;—look up to Him, and be glad in Him.’ This precept the apostle knew to be one which, to many of the members of a persecuted church, would at first seem impracticable,—indeed, almost paradoxical. To his own heart also, I apprehend, just as he was writing or dictating the ‘Rejoice alway,’ there came a sudden depression,—the weakness of nature, amid the trials of the prison, sending a sense of weariness and sorrow over him. But grace triumphed in a moment,—and to a spiritual ear how grand are the simple words of the voice of triumph,—how stimulating to the suffering Philippians,—‘*and again I say*’ (more exactly, ‘*will say*’), ‘*Rejoice!*’ As regards the momentary struggle in Paul’s heart between nature and grace, of which, as I have said, I think these words give us ‘an interesting glimpse, the passage reminds us of one in the 1st chapter: ‘Some preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but others of love. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice,—yea, and will rejoice.’

‘Rejoice in the Lord; and, that you may do this, commit your way wholly to Him. Towards your foes show the forbearance of a wise, loving, well-governed spirit, not returning evil for evil. Let all men with whom you come into contact find this to be your habitual course. May not the sight of a character so strange and heavenly have a blessed influence over some of them, and give you the exquisite joy of bringing souls to your Lord—of making those who were your enemies

brethren in Him? But, however this may be, leave the wrong done you to be dealt with by the Lord. His coming is near, and He will do all things well. In regard to all your wants and anxieties, too, of every kind, speak to God in prayer, and His peace will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Thus you will rejoice in the Lord alway.' Such appears to me to be the connection of thought in the paragraph.

By '*moderation*,' in the 5th verse, is meant, as the paraphrase just given has already suggested to you, not temperance in the gratification of our desires generally, but specially temperance or self-restraint in our relations to others, abstinence from anger, harshness, vengeance. Elsewhere in the New Testament, where the original word occurs, the rendering is '*gentleness*,' '*clemency*,' '*patience*,' any one of which is preferable to this ambiguous '*moderation*.' The exact idea is '*a considerate and forbearing spirit*.' The apostle would have us make allowances for the ignorance and weakness of others, knowing how much and constant need we stand in of having allowances made for ourselves, both by God and man. Taken generally, his precept here calls upon us, for example, in our business dealings, to remember that human laws, however carefully devised, may ever and anon, if rigidly enforced, act unjustly and cruelly; and to guide ourselves therefore, in every case, by the broad principles of equity in the sight of God. Similarly, in our judgment of the conduct of men, it enjoins upon us to take a kindly view, wherever this is possible, never believing evil of them until we cannot help it. In the case which seems to be at present specially before Paul's mind, that of a person who is '*persecuted for righteousness' sake*,' he would have the sufferer to form the mildest judgment he can respecting the procedure and character of his enemy; to remember and pity the melancholy darkness of soul which prompts the persecution; and, even if he be in a position to avenge himself, to withhold his hand, and leave

the matter with the Lord Jesus. When He comes to judgment, all wrongs will be righted.<sup>1</sup>

The suffering believers might well be patient, considerate, and forbearing,—for, says the apostle, '*The Lord is at hand.*' Whether looked at simply by themselves, or in their logical connection with the context, these words might very naturally be [taken to mean that Christ is ever ready to sustain and deliver His people, '*nigh unto all them that call upon Him,*' '*a very present help in trouble,*'—not like such gods as the Philippians had worshipped in their days of darkness, of which their votaries, through sad experience of neglect, were compelled to believe, as Elijah derisively reminded the priests of Baal, that, at the very time their aid was needed, they might be '*pursuing, or in a journey.*' But the general usage of the New Testament points decidedly to that other meaning which I have already indicated,—'*The advent of the Lord is at hand.*' As James has it, '*The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*'<sup>2</sup> The promise of the Saviour Himself is, '*Behold, I come quickly.*'

At first sight, declarations like these from the Lord and His inspired apostles startle us, through their apparent inconsistency with what we know to have subsequently happened. Eighteen centuries have gone by. The world has continued '*buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage.*' The '*sign of the Son of man*' has not

<sup>1</sup> In the Epistle of James, v. 9, —'Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door,' the 5th verse finds a very complete parallel,—the only difference being that there the reference is to relations between believers, whilst here, as I apprehend, the apostle is thinking mainly of the relations of Christians to '*them that are without.*'

<sup>2</sup> The author having had occasion, in his *Lectures on the Epistle of James*, to discuss, in connection with the passage quoted above, the same somewhat difficult question suggested by the words of Philippians now before us,—the two following paragraphs are, in substance, transferred from that work. The same is the case also with a paragraph on another branch of the same subject, in a previous lecture.

yet appeared in the sky. Scoffers say, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’ How then could the Saviour’s second advent be predicted in those old days as then near? Because thus the eye of God sees it. The Apostle Peter, you will remember, answers the question in this way, telling us that when ‘some men count the Lord slack concerning His promise,’ they leave out of their computation this element, that with Him ‘a thousand years are as one day.’ God’s ‘soons’ and ‘quicklies’ are not to be estimated by our impatient reckonings. ‘Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God,’ comes sounding to us over the distance of three thousand years,—and how very partially is it yet fulfilled! ‘Near’ and ‘distant’ are relative terms. For the little child, whose limbs soon grow weary, the friend’s house is far away, which for his father is but a step from home. So to the child, reckoning by his life, an event seems long past, far away in a hoary antiquity, which to the man on whom have come the snows of many winters, and who reckons by *his* life, seems to have occurred but yesterday. Now faith, in the measure of its vigour, enables us to see things in the light of God, giving us oneness of view with Him. When, then, our apostle says, ‘The Lord is at hand,’ he speaks as one who has been taught to reckon according to the years of the lifetime of the Most High—unbeginning, unending. On the same principle, you remember, in another place, he estimates the Christian’s affliction—affliction extending perhaps over threescore years and ten—as ‘but for a moment,’ because the standard by which he computes is the ‘eternal’ duration of the ‘weight of glory’ which is to follow.

That such is the true explanation of ‘nigh,’ ‘soon,’ ‘quickly,’ ‘at hand,’ in this connection, is shown by the fact that our Lord and the apostles tell us in other places of various things, of a kind requiring what men call a long time, which are to happen before His coming. Paul, too, finding that the Thes-

salonians had misconceived the principle of the reckoning, expressly cautions them against their error, as a dangerous one. ‘Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means’ (2 Thess. ii. 1-3). Yet the church should always feel her Lord’s coming to be near; and when her faith is lively, and her love glowing, she does. As, under the clear Eastern sky, a range of lofty mountains, which is yet many days’ journey distant, seems almost at hand; so, in the pellucid atmosphere of faith, the great towering event of the future, dwarfing all else, seems close above us. In seasons of elevated spirituality we feel the advent to be near. Chronologically, perhaps many years, as men reckon, may yet be to elapse; but faith sees Him coming ‘like to a roe or a young hart leaping on the mountains of spices.’ And when the grand event has happened, brethren, and we look back upon it from the eternity of blessedness and glory, we shall see ever more clearly—for we shall understand the reckoning ever more perfectly—how exactly the Lord fulfilled His promise, ‘Behold, I come quickly.’ The suffering Christians of Philippi might well cultivate ‘moderation’ of spirit and conduct with respect to their persecutors; we, too, in every trouble and alarm, may well ‘be patient, and stablish our hearts,—for ‘the Lord is at hand,’—‘the Judge standeth before the door.’

As we have seen, the substance of the 5th verse is this,—‘In your trouble from persecutors, cast your burden on your Lord,—who will soon come, to introduce His people into the fulness of rest.’ The transition from this to the precept of the 6th is simple and natural: ‘Remember, too, that your Father in heaven cares for you with tender love,—wherefore in all your difficulties and needs of every kind, go to Him by prayer.’

By the ‘*And*’ which begins the 7th verse it is shown that

the 6th and 7th belong closely to each other; and it is very important to notice this. The precept and the promise, which are felt by all of us to be most beautiful and precious separately, have yet a singularly exquisite loveliness in the connection originally given them by the Spirit.

The precept subdivides itself into a negative and a positive injunction. The negative is, '*Be careful for nothing.*' In illustrating this, I must begin by obviating a natural misconception. Through alteration, since the time our translation of the Bible was made, in the shade of meaning attached to some English words, the rendering here,—and that other, of substantially the same original words, in the Sermon on the Mount, '*Take no thought,*'—inadequately represent the mind of the Spirit. Indeed, though at the time correct, according to the force given to '*thought*' and '*careful*', they are now positively misleading. Literally understood, they appear to enjoin what is impracticable, and, even if it were practicable, would be a breach of Christian duty,—for the purpose of Christianity is the very opposite of making men *thoughtless* or *careless*. Its direct object is to lead to constant and intense thought and care regarding the interests of the soul; and its principles legitimately lead also to thought and care in regard to the interests of this life. Scripture distinctly enjoins, indeed, and that in very emphatic terms, that we should '*provide for our own, specially for those of our own house,*' and that we should '*provide things honest (or honourable) in the sight of all men.*' Now this involves much of thought and care. The teachings of our religion, properly understood, give no discouragement, much encouragement, to diligence and discretion in every part of our life, and to all prudent worldly forethought, such as is exhibited in life-assurance and similar ways,—always provided that we remember to '*seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.*'

The truth is, that the force of the word which our translators have rendered by '*thought*' and '*care*', is '*division*, or *distrac-*

*tion, of mind,'—such anxiety as is fitted to draw the mind away from God, distracting the Christian soul, making the earthly doubts and fears oppose but too effectually the heavenward longings, and rendering the believer for the time almost a 'double-minded man.' 'In regard to nothing, have distracting anxiety,'—this is the apostle's precept. The Philippian Christians, like the great majority of Christians in all ages, were most of them poor, struggling hard for daily bread. They were exposed, as all of us are, to disease and pain and bereavement. They were liable, like ourselves, to be at times misjudged and calumniated. And, living as they did among a heathen population, they were exposed to forms of persecution of which, through God's kind providence, we know nothing. 'Let none of these things move you,' says Paul,—'let none of them cause you tumult or distraction of soul. Never let your hearts be tossed with anxiety, like a ship driven hither and thither by the unruly billows.'*

All of us, brethren, know by experience the power of worldly anxieties, of one kind or another, to enfeeble our religious energies, and diminish our religious enjoyments. We go to pray ; and when our thoughts and desires should ascend to God, these anxieties call them down, and drag them another way. We go to hear the word of God ; and these anxieties, like the birds of the air in the parable, pick up the good seed almost before it reaches the ground. They haunt us in the closet, in the pew, at the communion table. They keep us from truly approaching God at all, or, if we enter His presence, it is with 'the loins of our mind' sadly ungirded—with the garments of our spirits dragging loosely, and sweeping after us the dust of the world. 'If, then,' says the apostle, 'you desire to live a life of elevated spirituality, of holy happiness and full usefulness, let nothing cause you distracting anxiety.'

The noblest system of heathen philosophy regarded an equability of mind, imperturbable alike by the troubles and the allurements of the world, as the highest state of the soul.

But philosophy could furnish no adequate motive power for attaining this equability. It could only state the theory, and exhibit its importance. And, as was to be anticipated, human nature had its own way against philosophy. But the apostle of Jesus Christ can supply the missing link. He can not merely tell us to be tranquil, but show us how the tranquillity is to be attained, and maintained.

Let us now, then, look at the positive side of the precept : '*In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*' It is true that all our circumstances, and all our thoughts and feelings regarding them, are already '*known unto God.*' He 'compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways ; and understandeth our thought afar off.' Still, in regard to every blessing, He loves 'to be inquired of, to do it for us.' In infinite wisdom and kindness He commands us to 'ask,' that we may 'receive.' Imagine that a mother among us were able to know, and to anticipate, all the troubles of her child, and did fully anticipate them, so that the child never came to her with any request,—do you think the life of either would be made happier by this,—that the sweetness of the blessed relation between mother and child would be by either more fully experienced ? Do you suppose that such freedom from the need of expressing his affectionate dependence on his mother, and trust in her, would be for the good of the child ? I know that the heart of every mother here responds at once with an unhesitating '*God forbid that such should be the relation between me and my child !*' So we might conceive the system of relations between God and His people such that prayer was not called for. But what Christian does not feel that such a system would lack what his heart knows to be inexpressibly precious ? What man of prayer would be willing to give up the joy of *asking* His Father, even if he knew that blessings both temporal and spiritual would come to him abundantly without asking ?

‘*Prayer and supplication*’ are several times spoken of together by Paul. The difference in meaning between the original words so translated seems to be, that the former is general, ‘a devotional approach to God,’—the latter, particular, ‘a special petition for the divine help.’ ‘By prayer, and, in this exercise, not merely by general and, it may be, vague entreaty, but by definite petition regarding the matter which at the time burdens your hearts, let your desires—thus becoming always, in the measure of your spiritual enlightenment, your “*requests*”—be made known unto God.’ Has there not been commonly, in our Scottish type of religion, think you, my brethren, too little of the *particularity* in prayer, which Paul here enjoins? In reverence, as we have thought, for the glory of God, have we not allowed ourselves to miss somewhat of a clear view of the glory of His Fatherly tenderness, as willing to listen lovingly to the tale of all our difficulties and wants? Has not heart been taken out of our devotional exercises sometimes by the generality to which we have thought it dutiful and becoming to confine ourselves? Would it not really honour God more, then, and would it not bring very much more comfort to ourselves, if we fully laid out the specialties of our position before Him? To want of this, I believe, is to be ascribed not a little of spiritual feebleness and spiritual gloom.

Observe the *range* of proper subjects of prayer—proper subjects of special petition,—‘*in everything*.’ The antithesis to the first clause of the verse, ‘Be careful *for nothing*,’ is direct and complete. And, no doubt, there is a particular reference here, as there, to *temporal* matters—persecution, poverty, and the like,—such as tended to arouse distracting care, and tempted to the despondency, or the sternness and vengefulness, against which the precepts of the immediately preceding verses have been directed. A distinctive feature in the religion of the Bible, as compared with every system which has sprung up in the corrupt heart of man, is the completeness with which it

embraces every element of our nature. A thoughtful heathen could rise to a wistful and vague idea that perhaps his *soul* might live for ever,—that the bird might soar to purer air and sing exultantly, when its prison cage, the body, was destroyed ; but an immortality of the body itself never entered his wildest dreams. The ‘babbler’ on Areopagus was deemed by the Athenians to set forth strange gods, when ‘he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.’ The gospel recognises the body as essential to complete man,—not, as the sages of old would have it, an accidental companion, whose society degrades the soul. At the right hand of the Father, Jesus sits, in fashion as a man ; and, by and by, the bodies of His people shall be made like to His glorious body. Surely, then, when the Father watches over the sleeping dust of His saints, we may feel well assured that He will watch over their outward interests while they live, and hear and honour their prayers regarding the troubles and difficulties connected with the affairs of this world as lovingly as the petitions which bear immediately on their spiritual interests. The truth is, indeed, that, just because the body holds so important and influential a place in our nature, we cannot draw a sharp line of distinction between our spiritual and our outward interests. Our spiritual life and our visible life act constantly and most powerfully on each other. As we have seen in examining the negative precept, the troubles of our daily course—the difficulties, often of a most trifling kind, which yet tend so much to fret—affect our religious feelings strongly, and constitute indeed a most important part of the discipline by which God trains His children to spiritual wisdom. We may confidently look, surely, for His gracious answer to all prayers for guidance and support, in connection with any form of this discipline.

But do we not often forget this most blessed and consoling truth, dear friends ? The wants which we consider strictly spiritual we carry to the throne of grace ; but in the cares of this world—in the disappointment of cherished hopes, the

thwarting of carefully devised plans, the anxieties of narrow income—do we not frequently nurse our depression, failing to remember the glorious breadth of the invitation and injunction, ‘*In everything* by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God’? Can we trust Him with our eternal welfare, and not with the care of our life here? ‘Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?’ ‘Our Father which art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread.’ In regard to every department of our life, my brethren, the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and will bring down showers of blessing, in views cleared, obstacles removed, and desires furthered, so far as it shall serve for God’s glory and the true good of the petitioner. Our Father’s providence knows no distinction of great, to be cared for, and minute, to be disregarded. He who ‘stretched out the heavens as a curtain,’ is the same who preserves the sparrows, and numbers the hairs of our heads. ‘*In everything*, then, let your desires be made known unto God,—for whatever interests His people interests Him.

Further, the apostle enjoins upon us to offer our petitions ‘*with thanksgiving*.’ No true prayer lacks this. It is generally expressed, and always implied. The renewed heart cannot but pour out its utterances of gratitude to Him who ‘crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies;’ and in the thanksgiving, we obtain encouragement for the supplication. ‘The Lord hath been mindful of us; He *will* bless us.’ The great general ground of thanksgiving is always present with us,—the love of God in Christ, which permits us to look on Him against whom we had sinned, as our Father, and to approach Him with filial confidence. However the believer may be situated, too, and whatever the nature of his petitions may be, he has

always something *special* to thank God for. In sore affliction, a Christian rightly exercised—whilst he feels very deeply that certainly his position is ‘for the present not joyous, but grievous,’ and asks God for the lightening of His hand, if this be consistent with His will—feels, at the same time, joy and gratitude in the depths of his soul, in the knowledge that in sending such discipline ‘God dealeth with us as with sons, chastening us for our profit, that we may be made partakers of His holiness.’ He is always sensible, too, however severe his trial may be, that it is not so severe as it might have been, and as it would have been had he received his *deserts* at God’s hand. The rod of kindness has been employed, not the ‘scorpions’ of stern judgment. When Jerusalem was overthrown, and God’s covenant people were scorched with the flames of divine anger, they could still say, ‘It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not *consumed*.’ When prayer is sent up in an hour of sore temptation, there may well be special thanksgiving for strength already received, and for the guidance and impulse afforded by the earnest warnings of the Word, and its ‘exceeding great and precious promises.’ And even when, in the very saddest sense, a Christian’s cry to God is ‘out of the depths,—even when he has fallen into grievous sin,—still, surely, he has great cause of thanksgiving, that he has not been allowed to run on in sin, but has been led to the mercy-seat to seek forgiveness.

We have now examined with considerable fulness the apostle’s double precept. It is very important for us always to bear in mind that the contrast he exhibits is between prayerfulness and *anxiety*, not between prayerfulness and *exertion*. The sincere and intelligent offerer of prayer is always one who, at the same time, thoughtfully and watchfully and vigorously exerts himself for the attainment of the end he desires. He knows that God blesses labour, not indolence. To say ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ and at the same time to let the hands hang down in sloth,—to say ‘Lead us not into tempta-

tion,' and at the same time to go needlessly into positions where former experience has shown us that we *are* in temptation,—this is but to insult God. No one ought to be so impelled to effort, or so sustained in effort, as he who has committed his way unto the Lord, and looks up for direction and support. No logical connection is more direct and complete than that which the apostle exhibits earlier in the epistle, 'Work, *for it is God which worketh in you.*'

As has been already remarked, the connection between the 6th and 7th verses, shown by the '*And*' which introduces the 7th, is very close and very beautiful. 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer let your requests be made known unto God; *and*—doing this you will find that—*the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*'

Within our hearts by nature, my brethren, there is rioting and turbulence, the will warring with the conscience, the fleshly lusts stifling the spiritual aspirations, and over all the dark shadow of a 'fear that hath torment.' 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' Amid all the joys we have, the thought, more or less definite, of sin and its deserts will still enter, to mar happiness. This thought is ever a skeleton at the feast, a bitter in the cup of sweet, a blighting shadow on the flowery path. So long as there is dissension in the depths of our hearts,—so long as we carry about with us a half-acknowledged conviction that we must have been made for some end far higher and nobler than any we have attained, or are even aiming at, that 'the wages of sin is death,' and that we have earned them,—we cannot by possibility have true, satisfying peace.

But when faith sees the grace of God in Christ, then comes spiritual rest. Jesus '*is our peace.*' The billows of self-reproach and anguish of conscience, even in their hour of wildest commotion, obey His voice, saying, 'Peace, be still.' When our iniquities, like embattled hosts, array themselves against our peace, faith's firm utterance of the name in which she trusts,

'The Lord our Righteousness,' can put their terrors all to flight. This sweet tranquillity of spirit is '*the peace of God*',— given by His grace, and essentially akin to the ineffable peace of His own nature. '*The fruit of the Spirit*' of Him who '*rests in His love*,' is, most naturally, '*love, joy, peace*.'

Those to whom the apostle wrote were already Christians. To some extent, therefore, they had experience of spiritual peace. But the connection in which he places his sweet assurance here, reminded them most helpfully of the nature and the needful sustenance of their happiness. '*Let your hearts have ever a vivid sense of the Fatherly relation to you of God in Christ; and seek close and constant communion with Him.*' Thus your "*peace shall be as a river*." To "*pray without ceasing*" is the secret of ability to "*rejoice evermore*." God "*will keep the man in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him*." Such is evidently the apostle's teaching; and the experience of all generations of true believers, my brethren, has proved its truth. Amid the sorest buffetings of the storms of adversity, they who, through the energy of faith, are enabled '*in everything*, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let their requests be made known unto God,' find breathed over their spirits a holy calm. Childlike trust like that of the shipmaster's little son, in the familiar story, who had no fear, '*because his father was at the helm*,' will never fail to bring similar childlike rest.

This spiritual rest '*passeth all understanding*.' To the natural man it is an utter mystery. He may read of it in the Bible, or hear believers tell of their experience of it, but the words convey to his mind no distinct impression. No mode or amount of explanation could give a man, deaf from his birth, a clear apprehension of the sweetness of Handel's rendering of '*He shall feed His flock like a shepherd* ;' or a man blind from his birth, a clear apprehension of the glory of the sun, and the beauty of nature which the sun lights up everywhere. Similarly the unbeliever cannot by possibility see the splendours of the

Sun of righteousness, or understand why Christians ‘rejoice in that light,’—cannot by possibility know the peace which Christ’s ‘little flock’ have in hearing the voice of their good Shepherd, and following Him. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’

Even to believers themselves, too, this peace ‘passeth all understanding;’ and this, doubtless, is the thought mainly in the apostle’s mind here. Its nature is transcendently sublime, and its preciousness immeasurable. It flows from ‘the love which passeth knowledge,’ and which ‘does exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.’ God alone fully understands the grandeur of His own gift. And this peace, dear friends, He offers freely to you and me, by nature ‘alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works.’ ‘Behold, what manner of love !’

This wondrous peace, the apostle goes on to tell the Philippians, ‘*shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*’ Exactly rendered, the last words are ‘*in Christ Jesus,*’ the phrase so dear to the apostle, and so constantly occurring in his letters. It is as in vital union to Christ,—it is through the wisdom and the energy given by His indwelling Spirit, that peace will carry on its blessed work. ‘As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me,—for without Me ye can do nothing.’

‘In Him,’ then, ‘the peace of God *shall keep our hearts.*’ We have here a charming and most suggestive paradox,—for the word rendered ‘*keep*’ means strictly ‘to guard’ as a soldier. ‘The peace of God shall, with strength for war, defend you’ —‘*shall garrison your hearts.*’ Persecution may come to the gates of the soul’s fortress, hurling against them its most appalling terrors; but all who cast their care on God, knowing that He careth for them, will, by the peace He inbreathes, be

shielded from tormenting fear and from apostasy. ‘These things I have spoken unto you,’—said the Lord, in ending His valedictory words to His disciples,—‘*that in Me ye might have peace;* in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer,—I have overcome the world.’ These words are ‘Yea and Amen in Him.’ They that heard the stern denunciations of Stephen ‘were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth ; but he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.’ Even under the twilight of the Old Economy, too, how gloriously the power of ‘the peace of God’ to garrison the soul in time of trial was evinced ! ‘Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, If ye worship not the golden image which I have set up, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace ; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands ? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.’ ‘In Him’ who was to be the mysterious Fourth with them, ‘walking in the midst of the fire,’ ‘the peace of God guarded their hearts.’ ‘When He giveth quietness,’ dear brethren, ‘who can make trouble?’

Under trials of every kind the sublime power of this peace is shown. Place the believer where you will,—in sudden poverty,—on a bed of pain,—by the grave of a dear friend : he cannot but feel the affliction painful, perhaps very painful,—yet the guardian ‘peace of God’ will keep him from murmuring. He knows that, whatsoever passes away, his most precious treasure is safe for ever, and that ‘all things work together for good’ to him. He can say, therefore, ‘I have all and abound.

None of these things move me. Nay, in them all I am more than a conqueror, through Him that loved me.'

Against the seductions of worldly pleasure, too, where can any defence be found like that which heavenly peace supplies? Will a man sigh for husks, when he feels that God is giving him continually the bread of life? Will he who can say, 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup,' seek 'to lay hold on folly'? 'By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,—esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.'

Still further, however,—not the 'hearts' only, but also the 'minds,' or 'thoughts,' of God's people, are 'kept' by 'joy and peace in believing.' The missiles of unbelief, which are flying so thick and fast in our day, can make no impression on a mind defended by the 'assurance of hope.' The man of self-knowledge, who can say, with a full sense of the meaning of his declaration, 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word is unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart,' has here for himself an impregnable argument against all attempts to discredit the authority of that word, or to mystify or fritter away the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a guardianship incomparably more secure than that which can be afforded by any acquaintance with the works of learned writers on the evidences of Christianity, or any skill in dialectic fence,—valuable as both of these are, in their own place; and it is the guardianship, not of folly or inertness of spirit, but, as seen in the light of God, of the truest and deepest reason. 'The man who has this peace of God, "has the witness in himself" which scoffers cannot silence. Tell him that his Bible is not true,—that his Saviour has no existence,—that his religion is a fable, and his hope a dream; while you are talking and reasoning, he is feeling the power of all these things—experi-

encing their truth and reality and blessedness. His religion has ceased to be a subject of speculation ; it has become a matter of sense. You might as well tell him, in the broad light of day, that there is no sun in the heavens to shine on him,—or that he himself, living, breathing, and acting, has no existence.'<sup>1</sup>

By nature, in many respects, ‘a reed shaken with the wind,’ the man in whom dwells ‘the peace of God’ has mind and heart shielded thereby. His thoughts of God are kept true and influential ; his affections are kept set supremely on Him. ‘The joy of the Lord is the strength’ of His saints.

<sup>1</sup> Charles Bradley.

## XXVIII.

## SUMMARY OF DUTY.

'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.'—PHIL. iv. 8, 9.

THE series of practical counsels, into which the line of thought in the 3rd chapter naturally led the apostle, is here closed by a singularly clear and comprehensive summary of Christian duty, and an affectionate appeal to his readers to cultivate, thoughtfully and diligently, universal holiness. 'Having named the name of Christ,' he says, 'give all diligence to depart from iniquity, and to add to your faith every strong virtue and every tender grace of Christian character. In such a world as this it is hard, under any circumstances, to live a godly life. For you Philippians, brought up many of you in heathenism, and all surrounded constantly by the abominations of heathenism,—exposed, too, occasionally, to the misleading teaching of professed disciples of the Lord Jesus, who, while claiming to be peculiarly spiritual, do in fact "glory in their shame, and mind earthly things,"—it is *very* hard. Strive, then, dear brethren, with intense earnestness, to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, by lives of blamelessness, and patience, and consecration to the advancement of His kingdom.'

Observe the force of 'whatsoever things' here. We feel that the repetition of these words so many times gives them most

marked emphasis. We seem to hear the apostle saying in them, ‘Do not content yourselves with the perception and acceptance of the general principle, that truthfulness and justice and purity are beautiful and needful; but bear in mind constantly, that a life of truthfulness and justice and purity is made up of daily and hourly acts characterized by these virtues. The true economist of his income is the man who not merely holds that economy is desirable, but brings this conviction to bear on “whatsoever things” involve outlay of money. Time is “redeemed” by those who carry a sense of its value into “whatsoever things” claim their attention. Similarly, his life is a godly life, who remembers that life is made up of days and hours, and the acts performed in days and hours,—who is always thoughtful and watchful and prayerful,—and from whose heart, purified by grace, there exhales a fragrance of heaven, to pervade “whatsoever things” God’s providence brings him into connection with. The wise Christian will bring his Christianity into all the details of his life. Observe also that such a Christian will not “pick and choose” among the aspects and elements of godliness; but “whatsoever things” his conscience and his Bible tell him to be accordant with the divine will, these all and always he will do,—“esteeming all God’s commandments concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way.” The full beauty of the Christian character, and its full effectiveness as a sweet persuasive influence on the world, are not obtained by the exhibition of one or two virtues with great completeness and constancy, but by the manifest presence and harmonious development of all. Exhibit in your character, therefore, all the elements of a full ripe Christianity. Lead forth in your life all the graces in choral order and festal array,<sup>1</sup> that each may take her fitting

<sup>1</sup> Something like this image lies in the word *ἰπιχορηίσατε*, with which (2 Ep. i. 5) Peter introduces a summary of Christian duty, similar to the present, and which our translators have rendered, of necessity perhaps, but certainly prosaically enough, by ‘add.’

and needful part in the grand anthem which every sanctified nature is continually raising to the glory of Him who “washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

The words which the apostle employs in this summary of duty may be taken, and by some expositors are taken, in a sense so wide as to comprehend, each of them, universal holiness. Thus, to cherish and show truthfulness in all things, towards God and ourselves and our fellow-men,—to be pure, to be just or righteous, to be lovely, in all our relations to God and man,—every one of these denotes universal conformity to the divine will. In this case, by the group of terms are set forth various *aspects* of this universal holiness. The force of the passage, however, seems to me to be somewhat lost by taking this view of the meaning. It appears very much more natural and very much more accordant with Paul’s usual pointedness of practical teaching, to regard the several terms as describing distinct excellences—distinct elements of Christian character. This paragraph, and that which immediately precedes it, are shown by the similarity of their conclusions to have had in the apostle’s mind a close connection. Now in the former he enforces the importance of communion with God—of entering by faith into the ‘secret of His tabernacle,’ and there abiding with Him in blessed fellowship. In the present passage, then, as I apprehend, presupposing the existence and cultivation of such fellowship, he passes on to speak of the kind of life in the world which becomes the Christian profession. By ‘whatsoever things are true,’ he means, I think, simply, ‘truthfulness in all our dealings of every kind with our fellow-men,’—by ‘whatsoever things are pure,’ ‘purity in everything,’ in the sense in which we should commonly understand such words,—and similarly of the rest.

‘*Whatsoever things are true*’ comes first,—truthfulness in all circumstances. Without truthfulness there can be no basis of order among moral beings, no possibility of happiness in their relations to each other. If God were not absolutely true, we

could have no reasonable peace or hope in Him ; and, according to the measure in which men imitate the truthfulness of God, is the comfort of social life. Men living together constitute, for many purposes, one body ; and the welfare of this body politic is as really dependent on the veracity of the various members, as that of the body of each individual is on the truthful communications of its organs with each other. This is the exact image and argument employed by Paul in writing to the Ephesians. ‘Putting away lying,’ he says, ‘speak every man truth with his neighbour, *for we are members one of another*’ (Eph. iv. 25). This is beautifully expanded by an eloquent father of the church : ‘Let not the eye lie to the foot, nor the foot to the eye. If there be a deep pit, and its mouth, covered with reeds, present to the eye the appearance of solid ground, will not the eye use the foot to ascertain whether it is hollow or firm ? Will the foot tell a lie, and not the very truth ? And what, again, if the eye were to spy a serpent or wild beast, would it lie to the foot?’<sup>1</sup> ‘Whatsoever things are true,’ then—truth-telling at all times, in all ways, at all hazards—this is what God enjoins upon us,—here, as in everything, commanding what accords with perfect wisdom and perfect love. It is not needful, at present, to enter into the consideration of questions of casuistry regarding the lawfulness of deceptions in war, of playful deceptions, and the like ; the answer to which is, in some instances, difficult,—in very many, obvious to common sense. The grand general rule is, that wilful deception, by word or act, directly or by equivocation, is forbidden by God.

With hearts like ours, and in a world like this, it is very hard to maintain perfect truthfulness. To falsehood, especially in its most common form, oral untruth, temptations are peculiarly frequent and strong. They present themselves in connection with all the circumstances of social life, alike in business and in recreation. Then the sin is committed so easily and

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom.

rapidly that, almost before we are conscious that the thought of uttering a falsehood has entered the mind, a lie may have been spoken. We obtain very little help, too, for cleaving to ‘whatsoever things are true,’ from popular feeling on the subject. The heathen neighbours of the Philippian Christians scarcely felt that truth was at all morally preferable to falsehood ; and even among ourselves, after Christianity has been acting upon public feeling for many centuries,—whilst in respectable society a clear, well-defined lie may be frowned upon, yet how sadly the boundaries between truthfulness and falsehood have been broken down ! A broad border territory, or debateable land, seems to be recognised, of exaggerations and misrepresentations such as the world smilingly calls ‘white lies,’—a territory in which even the Christian may sometimes be in danger of losing his way, and straying into the enemy’s country. The only safe course is to disregard the world’s maps of morality, and study God’s, given in the Bible and the conscience. There all lies are marked *black*.

‘*Whatsoever things are honest.*’ The word ‘*honest*,’ which now we commonly use only to describe honourable feeling and conduct in relation to *property*, meant in the older English ‘honourable’ generally, and this is its meaning wherever it occurs in the Bible. The particular original word so translated here is used elsewhere in the New Testament only with reference to the character which becomes office-bearers in the church, and their wives, and members advanced in life ; and in this connection is always rendered by ‘grave.’<sup>1</sup> In the verse before us its force is given by our translators in the margin, with much precision, by the word ‘venerable.’ It designates *dignified* conduct, such conduct as shows self-respect, and wins respect from others.

Frivolity—the aversion of men, by nature, to seriousness of thought and feeling—is one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the gospel. The Christian has been enabled by

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Tim. iii. 8, 11 ; Titus ii. 2.

God's grace to overcome this hindrance. He has learned to take the unseen world into his calculations, and to see how serious a thing it is to spend the life which is the seed-time for the harvest of eternity. He feels, too, the loftiness of his position in Christ, as a child of God, a citizen of heaven. Buffoonery and silly lightness of demeanour are obviously altogether unsuitable to one holding such views, and cherishing such hopes as his ; and he neglects his duty, if he fail to ponder and practise ' whatsoever things are grave—honourable—dignified.' He may be, and should be, the very opposite of morose. He should be felt to bring habitually into society a bright atmosphere, an element of cheerfulness. But the cheerfulness should be always 'with grace,' spiritually healthful. There can be few influences for good stronger than that of the man from whose society his friends always depart with the impression that his companionship has added much to their happiness, whilst, throughout, his speech and conduct have been ' seasoned with the salt' of truth and love. Wit and humour are exceedingly liable to be abused ; but the employment of them in a spirit of purity and kindness, and in moderation, by such as have the gift of using them, and the hearty enjoyment of them by such as have the gift of appreciating them, are in nowise inconsistent with the noblest Christian character, and are often seen to give a special charm to such a character. The very fact that these are gifts of God, implies that they should be turned to account ; and by them many a heavy heart is lightened. Christians who lack a sense of humour have no more right to think ill of brethren who possess it, and use it, than Christians who have no ear for music have to frown upon others who enjoy and find themselves sweetened and elevated in spirit by a symphony of Beethoven. Whatever wreaths of pleasantry, however, may be thrown around a Christian life, yet, as a whole, the life should show such chastening and sobriety as accord with the conviction that sin and death are awful realities,—such calm, quiet dignity as beseems one

who, in Christ, is a ‘king and priest unto God,’ and who aims to become ‘meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.’

It is very needful that young Christians, in particular, should keep this duty in mind. We see all around us thoughtless, giddy self-indulgence, which calls itself gaiety. We hear all around us ‘the laughter of the fool, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot,’ ending very soon in cold, and silence, and darkness. Frivolous literature, too, meets us everywhere. Vast multitudes appear to read little else than what, professing to be comic, is frequently, in fact, the dreariest rubbish, wholly destitute of the true wit which has power to brighten and refresh, and, even where it is really marked by ability, deals often with subjects wholly unsuited for such a mode of treatment—subjects calling really for gravity, and, it may be, for sadness. Familiarity with this mountebank style of literature has a tendency to foster a foolish, flippant style of thinking and speaking, and to lead to a giddy, trifling style of life, even in those who have, acting within them, distinct impulses to better things. It is therefore very necessary that, as a counteractive to all such evil agencies, we keep with liveliness before our hearts the great ends for which life was given us, and its transcendently important relations to the life to come. Thus we shall be led growingly to feel how much it befits us to be sober-minded, and to follow diligently ‘whatsoever things accord with Christian dignity and gravity.’

Further, ‘*whatsoever things are just.*’ By ‘just,’ in the moral system of Christianity, is meant ‘equitable,—the giving to others their due, not merely in the sense in which human law may construe obligation, but in the sense, as the apostle has it fully elsewhere, of ‘that which is just and equal’ in the view of an enlightened conscience. Human laws, however carefully and wisely framed, will, if applied with rigour to every case, sometimes act oppressively. The Christianly just man recognises this fact, and tries always to follow the principles of true fair-dealing. He does not take advantage of obvious slips of the

pen, of the accidental invalidity of documents or bargains, of manifest oversights of any kind. He endeavours, in all matters of business, to do to others as he thinks it might not be unreasonable for him, if he were in the place of those others, to wish that they should do to him. He holds it unjust—a substantial violation of the eighth commandment of the decalogue—for a tradesman to sell, as genuine, goods which he knows to be adulterated, or to impose on an ignorant purchaser a price higher than would otherwise be asked; for an employer to exact from a servant work not coming within the terms or spirit of the engagement; for a servant to spend time for which his employer pays in doing nothing, or in doing work merely for himself. Justice, in the broad Christian meaning of the word, requires us to act, in all business relations of every kind, ‘not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God,—and, whatsoever we do, to do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men.’ That this is the true Christian principle on the subject, no person at all acquainted with Scripture will deny. But ah, dear brethren, have we not reason to fear that, if this be justice, then in our counting-houses, and warehouses, and workshops, and private dwellings, there is to be found a vast amount of injustice, perpetrated by men and women who have named the name of Christ? We sadly lack a vivid practical conviction that religion has to do with *everything*, and that those eyes which ‘are as a flame of fire’ ‘are in every place.’

The apostle mentions next ‘*whatsoever things are pure.*’ The term in the original would probably, from its ordinary application, suggest to the Philippians precisely what ‘pure’ does to us,—freedom generally from all that is gross and sensual, selfish and mean, and also, more specially, chastity in thought and feeling, word and conduct. The enlightened Christian shrinks from moral defilement of every kind, whether of heart or life. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ ‘Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of

the Lord.' 'Ye were sometimes darkness,' says Paul to the Christians of Ephesus, 'but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.' To professing Christians living among the heathen, by whom many forms of uncleanness were regarded as matters of entire indifference morally, it was obviously needful that the teachers of Christianity should give such warnings with great earnestness. Ah, my friends, is it not deplorable to observe the abundant evidence we have of the needfulness of giving the very same warnings with intense earnestness still, to gospel hearers even among our own dear Scottish people, heirs of the influence of Bible knowledge and Christian institutions for many generations? Dear brethren, let us all lay to heart the affectionate pleadings of the Spirit, that, 'as strangers and pilgrims, we should abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,' and should be 'holy in all manner of conversation, as He which hath called us is holy.' 'The wisdom that is from above is *first* pure.'

Looking back now over the points which have come under our consideration, you see that substantial elements of a strong and noble character have been before us. The Christian as he ought to be, and in the measure of his faith is, thoughtfully and prayerfully practises *truth*,—so that in every department of his life you find freedom from pretence and affectation, and his word is as good as his bond. *Seriousness and self-respect* show themselves always in his speech and deportment. His business dealings with others are marked by a scrupulous regard to *equity*. And those who take knowledge of his private life cannot fail to recognise a firm *self-restraint, and superiority of spirit to all sensuality and baseness*. Such a character as this, consistently maintained, evinces clearly to thoughtful observers

the working of the Divine Spirit, and is eminently fitted to gain for its possessor general esteem and admiration. Yet, as regards influence for good on the world, such a life may be cold and statue-like, destitute of the element which quickens. This life-giving power is *manifested love*.

In an address to a body of young medical brethren, the late eminent physician Sir James Simpson, whose own practice abundantly illustrated the teaching I here quote, said,—‘ Let us all cultivate to the utmost the steady manliness of hand and head which our profession so urgently demands ; but do not despise that gentle womanliness of heart which the sick in their depression and pain so often look for, and long for, and profit by. Be to every man his beloved, as well as his trusted, physician.’ We all feel that this advice was sound and important for the young men to whom it was given. And it holds, Christian friends, for you and me, whatever our worldly occupation may be ; for our profession, as Christians, is that of spiritual physicians. Our vocation in Christ, through whom alone the disease of sin can be overcome, is, by lip and by life, to commend to men the gospel, which is ‘ the power of God unto’ spiritual healing. To the manly strength of veracity and dignity, justice and purity, therefore, we must add the tender and winning graces also. The grand element of curative energy in the gospel is its proof that ‘ God is love ;’ and in the measure in which God’s children show likeness to their Father will be the persuasive and healthful influence of their character on men around. Hence the apostle’s next injunction in the passage before us is to ponder and practise ‘ *whatsoever things are lovely*.’

By ‘ *lovely*’ is meant ‘ calculated to gain love ;’ and, practically, ‘ *whatsoever things are calculated to gain love*’ is an expression equivalent to ‘ *whatsoever things show love*.’ Dr. Doddridge, speaking of a little daughter who died young, and who was a great favourite with all the friends of the family, mentions that, when he once asked her what made everybody

love her so well, she answered, ‘Indeed, papa, I cannot think, unless it be because I love everybody,’—‘a sentiment,’ he truly remarks, ‘obvious to the understanding of a child, yet not unworthy the reflection of the wisest man.’<sup>1</sup> Veracity, dignity, justice, and purity may procure respect ; but love alone is likely to win love.

Loveliness of character is the reflection of His beauty who ‘is love.’ ‘The wisdom from above is peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.’ The Christianly wise man, then, will be of a forgiving spirit, remembering that ‘God for Christ’s sake has forgiven him.’ He will endeavour to be courteous and kindly in all his dealings, feeling that, whatever his lot in life be, God has called him to be a gentleman, in the truest, richest sense of the name. He will enter with real interest into the feelings of those with whom he is brought into contact, ‘rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.’ His kindly heart will reveal itself in kindly speech—or, it may be, kindly silence,—in tenderness, considerateness, and benevolent activity. Of every means within his reach of promoting the temporal and spiritual welfare of men he will gladly avail himself, labouring personally in this cause, and cordially helping forward every enterprise which aims at loosing any of the bands of wickedness, undoing any of the heavy burdens, breaking any of the yokes, under which humanity groans. His charity will flow forth unobtrusively, but constantly, by all the channels within his reach. He will be ‘eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor. The blessing of him that was ready to perish will come upon him, and he will cause the widow’s heart to sing for joy.’ He will strive to cultivate a spirit which ‘is not easily

<sup>1</sup> In a note, Doddridge quotes an interesting parallel from Seneca (Ep. 9),—*Tibi monstrabo amatorium sine medicamento, sine herbis, sine ullius beneficæ carmine: si vis amari, ama,*—‘I will tell you of a love-charm which needs no drugs, nor simples, nor witch’s incantation : if you wish to be loved, love.’

provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' To follow Him who Himself 'took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses,' and 'went about doing good ;' who 'breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax ;' who 'feeds His flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs with His arm, and carrying them in His bosom,'—this is to pursue 'whatsoever things are lovely.' We see here the full flower of Christianity, the crown of all the graces.

'Meek and lowly,  
Pure and holy,  
Chief among the blessed three,—  
Turning sadness  
Into gladness,  
Heaven-born art thou, Charity.'

As has been already suggested, an unexpressed thought in the apostle's mind, in urging attention to 'whatsoever things are lovely,' was probably this,—'that thus you may fulfil your calling as lights of the world, by commending the gospel of Christ to the society among whom His providence has placed you.' This thought is yet more obviously present in connection with the counsel which follows, to the cultivation of '*whatsoever things are of good report.*' 'See to it that, while paying most diligent attention to those departments of character which the true believer alone, the man who is "taught of God," at all appreciates, you fail not also to exhibit fully those features which the conscience even of the natural man unhesitatingly approves, and which he may not unreasonably apply, to some extent, as a standard in estimating the value of the religion you profess.'

Such features of character are, in a measure, all that have been mentioned by the apostle, especially 'loveliness' of deportment. As here named distinctively, however, we may think, perhaps, chiefly of those classes of virtues which are universally esteemed the peculiar excellences of the sexes

respectively, and which we sum up under the names of ‘manliness’ and ‘womanliness.’ A Christian woman, in whom all that know her recognise modesty, self-restraint, ‘the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,’ is manifestly by these beautiful characteristics, which, being ‘of good report’—‘of great price’ in the eyes of men, as well as ‘in the sight of God’—secure the esteem of those around, placed in a position very favourable for winning their hearts to her Saviour. Similar commendation of the gospel is given by a Christian man conspicuously free from moral cowardice, from everything like effeminacy in his tone of thought and feeling, and from narrowness of sentiment and life,—a man who, whilst plainly having strong religious convictions, and maintaining, under all circumstances, earnestly and perseveringly, what appears to him to be important truth, has no bigotry, nor disposition to harp always on one string; but, with broad liberal sympathies, interests himself, not merely in the progress of his own religious denomination, nor even merely in the progress of religion generally, but also in all that concerns the social improvement of the community, and in the progress of literature, arts, and sciences. It contributes very largely to the influence for good of a servant of God, that he be known as a public-spirited citizen, and a large-hearted and energetic friend of all that is noble, and elevating, and healthful. This, I apprehend, may be what Paul points to particularly by ‘whatsoever things are of good report.’

The apostle’s purpose in giving this summary of duties, we have seen, was to speak of Christian character so far as it exhibits itself in the relations of the believer to his fellow-men. Having now set this character forth fully, alike in its strength and its gracefulness, he proceeds, in another short clause, to sum up what he has said, that it might be fixed in the memories of his readers: ‘*if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise;*’—that is, according to an idiom of the original language, ‘whatever virtue there is, and whatever praise.’ In ‘*virtue*,’ the four excellences of character first

mentioned are gathered up,—truthfulness, self-respect, equity, and purity; by ‘*praise*,’ the last two are obviously referred to, loveliness of demeanour, and regard to ‘whatsoever things are of good report.’

The word rendered ‘*virtue*’ is one largely employed in the writings of the heathen philosophers. It occurs but seldom in the New Testament, probably because it had been debased in its use by some of the philosophical schools, having had ideas attached to it very discordant with true goodness, and such as strikingly to illustrate how needful it was ‘that He who created man for Himself should tell him what best became him,—what he was made for, and what he should aspire to.’<sup>1</sup> This is the only passage in Paul’s writings where the word is found. Possibly, in using it, some such thought as this may have been intended—launching the whole appeal with special power upon the consciences of persons brought up, as the Philippians had been, with knowledge of and interest in the moral teaching of the heathen sages,—‘Give diligence that you exhibit to observers, fairly and winningly, the character which Christian faith is fitted to produce; remembering that even your pagan neighbours have some conception of the nature and excellence of *virtue*, and that though, unhappily, their views are in many respects defective and false, yet they can, in no small measure, recognise what is truly estimable and noble. Let them always see in you, therefore, what their hearts will acknowledge as good and beautiful, that thus your Saviour may be glorified.’

It is not without significance that the mention of ‘things lovely,’ and ‘things of good report,’ comes last in Paul’s list of graces, and that, in the summary, ‘praise’ follows ‘*virtue*.’ He would have us, while deeming it important to attend to what is amiable and to what men praise, to remember always that truth and self-respect, equity and purity, must take precedence. The *first* question of a good man will be, not ‘What

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Eadie.

will please those around me?' but, 'What is right?' Christian courtesy and amiability must never pander to falsehood, baseness, or frivolity,—however skilfully these may disguise themselves in graceful vestures. The world's standards for 'good report' are variable. God's is immutable, like Himself. To this difference in the standards, the results of adherence to them correspond. In the degree in which a man tends towards 'loving the praise of men more than the praise of God,' he makes approach to linking his destiny with the perishable. 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.' 'But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

The exact connection of the first clause of the 9th verse is somewhat doubtful. It seems to me to belong naturally to what precedes, rather than to what follows, thus,—' Whatsoever things are true,' and the rest,—'if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things,—which also ye learned, and received, and heard and saw in me.' Then comes a separate sentence,—'These things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.' The meaning is obviously, in substance, the same on either construction.

'Observe, too,' the apostle continues, 'that in directing your thoughts to the needfulness of cultivating these Christian graces, I am by no means introducing to you anything new. The subject is one on which, in my visits to you, I often spoke; and the moral truths which you thus "*learned*," you "*received*" with faith and hearty welcome. There was instruction by example, also, as well as precept. I have a full consciousness of much spiritual defect,—I have not yet attained, neither am already perfect,—yet I may safely point to my life among you, as having, on the whole, truthfully exemplified the moral principles I taught you and am now recalling to your minds. What you "*heard and saw in me*," illustrated, as regarded speech and conduct, "the things which are true, and dignified, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report."<sup>1</sup> I need not

<sup>1</sup> Some remarks on the becomingness of such references by the apostle

now, therefore, enter into any detailed exposition of duty. The simple summary which I have given you, will, I know, suffice.'

With respect to the points of character he has mentioned, Paul's injunction is twofold. He charges the Philippians, first, to '*think on these things.*' This is a matter of very great moment; and to neglect of the duty of *considering* the elements of a noble Christian life, rather than to positive indifference to them, is, no doubt, due in large measure the moral defectiveness of many professed servants of Christ, and, by consequence, their lack of spiritual joy, and the meagreness of their influence for good. 'Let not holiness in the general merely, but the various features of a holy character, be much before your minds. Meditate on them. Think of their relations to each other,—of the occasions which peculiarly call for exhibition of the various graces,—of the temptations which have special force with regard to them respectively.'

But secondly, with earnestness and perseverance, '*do these things.*' 'Let the fruit of thought and prayer be seen in lives of holy stability, and energy, and beauty. Give all diligence thus to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour. Be it your aim to follow the Lord *fully*; to live so as to evince on all the sides of your life that you have put on Christ.'

'*And (so) the God of peace shall be with you.*' This conclusion seems to show that the paragraph is intended to be parallel to that which preceded. There we had the injunction, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer let your requests be made known unto God,'—followed by the promise, 'and the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds.' Here we have the injunction, 'Do whatsoever things are true, and dignified, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report,'—followed by the promise, 'and the God of peace shall be with you.' Combining the two, we obtain this teaching: 'Vital to his own example will be found in the comment on the 17th verse of the 3rd chapter,—'Brethren, be followers together of me.'

religion, in healthy activity, gives, and can alone give, a restfulness of spirit such as the troubles of outward life are impotent to disturb. Now the two grand elements of vital religion are communion with God as our Father, and the thoughtful and diligent cultivation of universal holiness—conformity to the will of God in all things. Pray without ceasing, then,—and bring forth abundantly the fruit of the Spirit, which is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth,—and the God of peace shall be with you, shedding abroad His peace in your souls, to keep them, by its glorious guardianship, from all harm.'

## XXIX.

## CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

' But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again ; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want ; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'—PHIL. iv. 10-13.

THE apostle has now ended the counsels which it was in his heart to give to his brethren at Philippi. There remains for him only the duty of thanking them for the pecuniary help which they had sent to him through Epaphroditus ; and this he does in the closing paragraph of his letter, in language fitted greatly to gratify the givers, and, at the same time, to minister to their spiritual wisdom. The paragraph presents for consideration several points of interest and importance, with regard to Christian giving, and Christian receiving, and Christian feeling about worldly circumstances generally.

In various parts of his writings, Paul lays it down very distinctly as a law of Christ,—a law obviously equitable, and in its operation spiritually healthful to both parties,—that ministers should be supported by those for whose religious instruction and welfare they care. 'The Lord hath ordained,' he says, 'that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel' (1 Cor. ix. 14). It is evident, too, from allusions in the chapter from which these words are quoted, that most of the apostles and primitive teachers were in fact maintained by

the free-will offerings of the churches. Paul himself, however, in consequence of the bitter opposition and misrepresentation to which he was subjected by teachers who wished to bring the Christians under the yoke of Jewish ordinances, preferred, in many places, to support himself by working at his trade of tent-making, that thus he might ‘cut off occasion from them which desired occasion’ to accuse him of preaching the gospel for the sake of gain (2 Cor. xi. 12). But his faith in the affection and spiritual intelligence of the church at Philippi was such that, both now, and also, as he mentions in the 16th verse, at an earlier time, he unhesitatingly accepted a pecuniary gift from them. Manifestly no circumstances could be more suitable for making such a gift than when he was imprisoned, and thus very probably prevented, in a great measure at least, from earning a livelihood by the labour of his hands.

Observe the quiet dignity with which, at the outset of his acknowledgment of their contribution, Paul lifts this money matter up into a sphere where all things become sublime. The pleasure he felt in receiving their gift was ‘*in the Lord*,’—*Christian* joy. It was the Lord Jesus who had put it into their hearts to do this thing; and it was as an evidence of loyalty to Him, and affection, for His sake, to His minister, that the apostle welcomed the money. In the thoughtful kindness to him, the servant, which showed that the friends he loved so dearly cherished gratitude and devotion to his Master, it was most reasonable that he should ‘*rejoice greatly*.’

You will mark, too, the spirit of the *true gentleman* breathing through his language here, as always. I do not know that anything more clearly brings out whether a man really has this spirit, than the mode in which he receives kindness. How beautiful the mode is here! How perfectly free alike from boorish bluntness in the assertion of independence, and from adulation, or over-wrought expression of gratitude! Having delicately kept his acknowledgments on this subject for the close of the Epistle, because it was not seemly that, in

the communications of those whom divine grace had united by the tender tie of spiritual father and children, matters of this kind should hold other than an altogether subordinate place,—he begins his reference to it by stating that he felt great satisfaction in the Lord, ‘*that now at the last their care of him had flourished again.*’ His thought, you observe, blossoms into poetry. In former years the apostle’s heart had been gladdened, ever and anon, by kind messages and gifts from his friends at Philippi. For a considerable time, however, there had been none; but now, as after a long winter, the tree of their affection had ‘*flourished again,*’ putting forth leaf, and flower, and fruit. The ‘*now at the last*’ tells us touchingly of the weary longings he had felt for intercourse with his Philippian friends. Amid the sufferings of his imprisonment, and the troubles caused him in Rome by false brethren, he had often thought of the sweet simplicity of Christian feeling which had always prevailed among the members of the Philippian church, and the comfort he had always found in intercourse with them; and had yearned strongly for a renewal of this fellowship. ‘Now at the last’ the renewal had come, in a way fitted in every respect greatly to refresh him. In writing this ‘now at the last’ there was no thought further from his mind than that of reproach,—no thought present except the desire to tell his friends how much his heart had gone forth to them during the time when circumstances had prevented intercourse. The figure he has employed, too, is one fitted, perhaps, to obviate any idea that he intended reproach; for, though the tree be bare during winter, yet then, no less really than in the summer, it has life. But no sooner had the words been written, than the apostle saw that they were open to misconstruction; and he at once throws in a clause guarding against this,—‘*a matter wherein ye were careful also in the intermediate time, but ye lacked opportunity,*’—the reference in these last words being probably to the difficulty of obtaining a suitable messenger. Nothing could well gratify the Philippians more than such a statement

as this, showing the apostle's full confidence in the constancy of their love.

In the 14th and following verses, Paul continues those grateful acknowledgments of the kindness of his friends begun by him in the 10th, which we have just examined. The three verses intervening, which will occupy our attention during the remainder of this lecture, constitute a digression. It occurred to him, as it would seem, that, from the warmth of his statement, 'I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that your care of me hath flourished again,' some might mistakenly infer that he had been restless under the privations he suffered, and that the gift brought by Epaphroditus had suddenly aroused him from dejection to cheerfulness. Immediately, therefore, he guards against this impression, seeing that such a state of feeling would have been dishonouring to religion. In opposition to this thought, he bears testimony to the power of divine grace, in his experience, to give equability and restfulness of spirit amid all vicissitudes and trials of life. This digression is a passage of much interest and importance, exhibiting in a very graphic way a prominent feature of the apostle's character, and therein vividly illustrating the sustaining and beautifying power of the Divine Spirit. 'I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that your care of me hath flourished again. *Not, however, that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*' The apostle had come to know, like David, that 'there is no want to them that fear the Lord.'

The word '*content*' means originally, and indeed is only another form of, '*contained*.' We have in it, therefore, as no doubt in all words, if we fully understood them, not a cold symbol merely, but a lively pictorial illustration of the meaning. The man is '*content*,' who is able to feel himself '*contained*' by his lot,—who in the position which God has assigned him can find room, so that he has rest and satisfaction,—who within his circumstances at the time can always discern a home of

reasonable comfort, and therefore, however his desires may at times healthfully enough roam beyond its bounds, yet never has them painfully so exercised. Every person of the slightest thoughtfulness is sensible of the dignity and happiness connected with such a state of mind as this. It is evident, too, that all around the contented man derive advantage from his contentment, because, so far as he is concerned, they are secure from various sources of trouble. To discontent alone are due avarice and ambition and envy, and the innumerable sins and crimes which spring from these. A world of universal contentment would be Paradise restored.

To every moderately attentive and candid observer of human life, one strong argument for the cultivation of contentment presents itself clearly and constantly, in the fact that a *law of compensation* acts so extensively in connection with men's lot. The poor man lacks, in some measure, the means of ministering to outward comfort and refinement which the rich man has ; but at the same time he is free from many anxieties, many distractions and fears, which wealth generally brings with it. The childless wife may remember that parents, amid their peculiar and exquisite joys, have also innumerable peculiar difficulties and burdens ; and, as she thinks of her neighbour whose heart a prodigal son has 'pierced through with many sorrows,' she may well 'possess her soul in patience.' Power, with all its attractions, has endless troubles ; and no doubt the sentiment of very many kings and rulers was expressed by the pope who left this epitaph for himself : 'Here lies Adrian the Sixth, who thought nothing in his life to have befallen him more unhappy than that he had to rule.' Advancement in fame and influence involves special exposure to envy and calumny ; and thus, observing how 'that fierce light which beats upon' high estate, in any department of life, 'blackens every blot,' and how assiduously and malevolently the character of eminent men, who, it may be, endeavour faithfully to 'wear the white flower of a blameless life,' is misrepresented, the lowly may be grateful

for their obscurity. It is very plain that no ‘inheritance’ of earthly good is ‘undefiled,’ any more than it is ‘incorruptible.’

Obvious, however, as are the dignity and manifold advantages of a contented spirit, and plain as is the teaching of the facts which have just been adverted to, still the experience of all ages has shown that, without the influence of true religion, men cannot attain to such a spirit, with anything like fulness and constancy. Thought and observation, while helpful as handmaids of religion, are impotent standing alone. Nature persistently defines ‘Enough’ to mean ‘Something more than we have.’ Heathen philosophers could see truth on the subject so clearly as to make contentment their ideal. Heathen poets could thus sing,—

‘Tossed on a sea of troubles, O my soul,  
Thyself do thou control ;  
And to the weakness of advancing foes  
A stubborn heart oppose ;  
Undaunted ’mid the hostile might  
Of squadrons burning for the fight.

‘Thine be no boasting, when the victor’s crown  
Wins thee deserved renown ;  
Thine no dejected sorrow, when defeat  
Would urge a base retreat.  
Rejoice in joyous things,—nor overmuch  
Let grief thy bosom touch  
Midst evil ; and still bear in mind  
How changeful are the ways of human kind.’<sup>1</sup>

But self-seeking had its own way against theory. Envy and ambition proved the feebleness of abstract principles, when brought into contention with human depravity. In the religion of the Bible alone, which gives the soul the knowledge of the living God as an object of love and confidence, is found a motive power strong enough to enable a man to struggle successfully with his natural tendencies to discontent. Nothing else can inbreathe a spirit of true rest.

<sup>1</sup> Archilochus. The translation is from Lord Neaves’s *Greek Anthology*.

Christian contentment is that feeling of repose of heart which results from an intelligent recognition of divine providence, as the care of an infinitely kind and wise and holy Being, exerted constantly in regard to all things, great and small, and absolutely controlling everything, so as to make it subservient to His ends. When a man sincerely believes in such providence, and this as the providence of a *Father*, he cannot but be content with whatever is his lot,—because God has assigned it to him, and what seems good to God must certainly be best.

Men who are in a *torpor*, through indolence, sometimes fancy themselves contented. With this feeling Christian contentment has nothing in common. It naturally stands associated with energy, with vigorous and gladsome activity; for the very same faith in providence which inspires the believer with content, gives him also a stimulus to exertion. He believes that the Lord his God will bless him in the works of his hand, so far as such success would bring him real good.

Christian contentment is essentially distinct, too, from *mere natural resolution*—such as is occasionally found in men, in considerable strength—not to be bent or broken by circumstances. Of this the sustenance is pride. When the man of such mere natural resolution asserts his ability to retire within himself, and in his own mind find comfort and quiet, however wintrily storms may rage without,—he glorifies *himself*. The believer also retires within himself; but it is because God has come to dwell in his heart, and thus made it a holy place. Fellowship with that Divine Friend, whom he knows to be, by every variety of providential dealing, working out towards him the purposes of Fatherly love, gives him rest of spirit. Thus his contentment evidently and eminently glorifies *God*.

The reasonableness and dutifulness of contentment with any lot in life will become ever clearer to the Christian, if he allow his mind to rest on the various aspects of the subject, as lighted up by Scripture.

He will feel increasingly that *the least he enjoys is immeasurably more than in justice he could expect, and that the worst he can here suffer is immeasurably less than he deserves.* ‘It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.’ ‘Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?’ If we can habituate ourselves to look at our circumstances in their relation to our deserts, rather than to our likings, we shall see, on every side, abundant grounds for thankfulness and praise. Alleviations will be found in connection with the heaviest trouble; some brightness even where at first all seemed dark. The chastisement is with ‘whips,’ when it might have been with ‘scorpions.’ We have had but to ‘run with the footmen,’ instead of having to ‘contend with horses.’ The clouds do not always ‘return after the rain.’

Again, the conviction will become always more impressive, that *all God’s dealings with us in providence are meant to serve as a discipline for the soul.* Said Moses to Israel, ‘Remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee; and He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.’ For a moral end, you observe—for training to spiritual wisdom—were intended both the adversity and the prosperity, the ‘suffering to hunger’ and the ‘feeding with manna.’ In nothing is growth towards the ‘measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ’ more marked, than in increase of practical apprehension of the truth that to moral ends divine providence always works, with a variety of treatment most graciously adapted to the requirements of varied temperaments and varied intelligence. According to an image employed by Isaiah, the Divine Husbandman deals with us as the Eastern farmer with different kinds of grain: the harder and coarser kinds he bruises with the iron wheel, ‘but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin

with a rod' (Isa. xxviii. 27). In the degree in which he understands all this, a believer is content. He has come to know and feel that the welfare of the soul is infinitely more important than anything merely temporal can be; and therefore he will accept thankfully the position in life which God has assigned him, as the best for his spiritual health at the time. He has prayed, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; cleanse me from secret faults;' and he believes God's providential actings towards him to be one mode in which He is answering the prayer. When trouble of any kind comes upon him, therefore, he will, on the one hand, 'not despise the chastening of the Lord,' but gravely consider it, as being a minister of God for his soul's good; and, on the other hand, he will not 'faint when thus rebuked of Him,' but cast himself, with a child's trust, on His sustaining and comforting grace.

It is very important,—and this is one of the highest and most difficult attainments in Christian wisdom,—that there should be a realizing operative sense of the *unlimited range* of the discipline of providence. We are exceedingly prone, even while recognising it, and giving ourselves up to the teaching in prominent occurrences in our lives, to forget that the training is as really given in *all* that befalls us. John Newton says, 'Many Christians who bear the loss of a child, or the destruction of all their property, with the most heroic Christian fortitude, are entirely vanquished by the breaking of a dish, or the blunders of a servant; and show so unchristian a spirit, that we cannot but wonder at them.' The observation of us all tells that this witness is true. Now such sinful outbreaks of discontent are plainly due to a forgetfulness that in what we reckon the little events of life, as well as in the great, divine providence is present—present to teach, 'to humble us, and to prove us, and to know what is in our hearts, whether we will keep God's commandments, or no.' By far the larger proportion of the history of all men is made up of little occur-

rences ; and the sum of the influence of these little things on our character is a great sum. Let us believe, then, that He by whom ‘the hairs of our heads are all numbered,’ is, by the little sorrows and the little joys of life, offering us instruction, as really as by the more notable. The truth is, that nothing is little which has moral bearings.

The thought, too, is fitted to be a most influential one with the child of God, that, *however dreary to the carnal eye his lot here may be, he will very soon exchange it for heaven.* Earth is not our home. We are but journeying homewards ; and—as wayfaring men before whose hearts already rises the vision of their own happy fireside, and all the dear ones around it, may well bear easily the discomforts of the resting-places into which they turn to tarry for a night on the way—so is it most reasonable that the Christian should be content with the entertainment he receives here below, since he expects to reach heaven so speedily. When our hearts are depressed, then, by difficulties and vexations, let us pray that God would give us ears to hear the voice of true wisdom, saying—

‘ Be comforted,  
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,  
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread  
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod  
To meet the flints? At least it may be said,  
“ Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God.” ’<sup>1</sup>

This thought, of the brevity of this earthly life, and the littleness of even its greatest possible distresses, as seen in the light which shines from heaven, is probably, in most cases, the most efficient practical argument for Christian contentment. Without it, the others would be featherless and untipped arrows ; whilst in our consideration of it, the energy of the others seems to gather around it. We feel the case to be so ; and the first Christians felt it so. The Hebrew believers ‘took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Browning.

that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' The Apostle Paul 'fainted not, while he looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal ;' and 'reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Is it wonderful that one who could, with vivid realization, so 'reckon,' should have the contentment with his earthly lot of which we read in the passage now under consideration ? Could any state of feeling be more reasonable ?

Whilst beginning, as his actual circumstances and the connection of his remarks naturally suggested, with a reference to his contentment under poverty and manifold sufferings, the apostle goes on to magnify the grace of his Saviour by telling his friends that he found himself enabled to bear prosperity also with equability of spirit. He was led so fully and vividly to apprehend the truth that God alone can satisfy man's heart—God's favour, and fellowship, and likeness,—and that God can satisfy the heart perfectly, that nothing external—neither poverty nor riches, humiliation nor honour, trouble nor rest—could seriously destroy the balance of his feelings. Now and again, in his course as a minister of Christ, he had been in positions of considerable outward comfort, surrounded by kind and helpful friends, and free from physical privations. He had found, in such cases, that he was able to enjoy the prosperity without undue delight in it ; as well as now to endure the hardships of his imprisonment without great depression of spirits. '*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*'

We naturally think, all of us, that we could bear wealth better than poverty. Observation and Scripture both tell us the contrary. It needs a very steady hand satisfactorily to carry a full cup. No doubt the cares of this world, to which

the poor are exposed, are apt to ‘choke’ the good seed of the word, and make it unfruitful; and in *extreme* poverty, where a father or mother hears children crying for bread, and has none to give them, it must be very hard to retain entire restfulness of heart in the divine love. But among persons to some extent influenced by religion, we should find, I apprehend, a much greater proportion of the poor uninjured spiritually by their poverty, than of the rich uninjured by their riches. We have in Scripture a very much larger number of ‘charges to them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches,’ than we have of warnings to the poor regarding the hazards connected with their condition. As regards spiritual life, the tendency of outward prosperity is to enervate, to make a man flaccid and pithless, easily overcome by temptations to self-indulgence, to pride and vain-glory, and, curiously enough, to discontent and greed. It is frequently ‘when riches increase,’ that men are most liable to ‘set their heart upon them.’ Often, in his heart, as Zophar the Naamathite remarked long ago, a rich man, ‘in the fulness of his sufficiency, is in straits.’ The peevishness and unmanliness of Ahab, the king of Israel, who ‘laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread,’ because Naboth declined to sell him his vineyard; and of Haman, the favourite of the king of Persia, whom all his success ‘availed nothing, so long as Mordecai the Jew bowed not, nor did him reverence,—this not merely has innumerable counterparts in ungodly men who prosper in the world, but has too much also that resembles it, there is ground to fear, even in the prosperous who know the Lord. On the whole, it seems to be a rarer and grander attainment, to ‘know how to abound,’ even than to ‘know how to suffer need.’

The apostle tells us very distinctly that, to obtain either knowledge, we must ‘*learn*.’ God has revealed to us truth which, when understood and believed, can keep the soul equable in all worldly circumstances—calm and restful in Him.

He gives us, in His providence, fields for proving and improving our spiritual strength. He offers to us, freely and abundantly, the guiding and sustaining influences of His Spirit. We, on our part, having thus the privilege of divine teaching, are called on, if we would make progress, to set ourselves to ‘learn,’ by being thoughtful, and vigilant, and prayerful. We must be diligent students, if we are to succeed ; for certainly no form of Christian excellence is harder of attainment than such equipoise of spirit as is here described by Paul. The difficulty and sublimity of this knowledge are perhaps suggested by the original word rendered in our translation ‘*instructed*,’ for, in its strict use, it was applied to initiation into the famous heathen mysteries,—those of Eleusis, and the like. The man who knows ‘both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need,’ takes his place not in the outer ranks, but among the most proficient students of religion. He has learned the secret of a happy life. He has been ‘initiated’ into the ‘mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.’

In the 13th verse, the apostle’s statement of the moral power possessed by him becomes yet bolder. It takes a form, however, which prevents the possibility of any accusation of vain-glory, by ascribing all the glory to the Redeemer. No man ever had a lowlier opinion of himself than Paul had. His whole history and character prove that he felt in his inmost soul what he said, when he spoke of himself as ‘not meet to be called an apostle,’ as ‘less than the least of all saints,’ as ‘the chief of sinners.’ Yet at times, in his letters to the churches,—whose own experience enabled them to confirm this class of statements to the letter, however much, one can hardly but think, they sometimes lovingly doubted the other,—he is led to speak of his ministerial efficiency, and of the consistency of his Christian character;—with what exquisite humility always, and wondering thankfulness ! His crown was ever cast down before the throne of his Saviour. ‘I laboured more abundantly than they all,—yet not I, but the grace of God which was with

me.' 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world,—by the grace of God.' So here, 'I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. *I can do all things,—through Christ which strengtheneth me.*'

A more exact rendering of the last words is '*in Christ which strengtheneth me,*' or rather,—according to a reading which is probably the true one, being found in the oldest manuscripts,—'*in Him which strengtheneth me.*' This latter mode of expression pleasantly illustrates the familiarity to the mind of Paul himself and, as he doubted not, to that of his readers, of the thought that the spring of their spiritual energy was in their Lord. The apostle puts the truth explicitly elsewhere, 'I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me,' or '*strengthened me,*'—in the original, the same word as here (1 Tim. i. 12).

Paul's language here, you observe, implies an acknowledgement of personal weakness. This we have very fully in other places. 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,—for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*' Naturally powerless and dead, the believer finds in Him 'the Resurrection and the Life.' By Christ he is taught truth which presents to him the strongest motives to holy devotedness; and the example of Christ, as his Forerunner, is felt by him to be most stimulating. But this is not all, nor most. He is, through the grace of God, so vitally united to Christ by his faith, that Christ's life is revealed in his. All our power for true service of God, my brethren, is '*in Christ, who strengtheneth us.*' 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.' 'We live ; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us.' Thus Paul was not merely 'content' to bear imprisonment and poverty, but would '*most gladly glory*

in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him ; for, when he was weak, then was he strong' through His strength who had said to him, ' My grace is sufficient for thee ; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' In the circumstances where man most feels his own impotence, the glory of the Saviour, who lives in His people, and whose strength reveals itself in them, is most signally attested ; and, therefore, in being placed in such circumstances the apostle would even exult.

' In Christ,' the believer has—or may have, if he will rise to the apprehension and acceptance of it—what may be called a moral omnipotence. There is no duty so arduous, that 'in Him,' the Almighty and All-wise, it cannot be discharged,—no trial so severe, that 'in Him' it cannot be undergone with fortitude and spiritual advantage. '*I can do all things in Him which strengtheneth me.*' Would that we understood this more,—that we proved its truth for ourselves,—that in our Christian life we looked away more entirely from mere earthly helps, and practically showed belief that 'Christ Jesus is made of God to us,' not 'wisdom and righteousness' only, but also 'sanctification' !

## XXX.

## CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY AND ITS REWARD.

‘ Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only ; 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift ; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound ; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household. 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.’—PHIL. iv. 14-23.

THROUGHOUT the larger part of this closing passage of the Epistle, Paul continues his grateful acknowledgments of the thoughtful kindness of his friends at Philippi. This leads into a doxology to the gracious ‘God and Father’ from whom he and they alike received all their support, and all their stimulus to holy love. Then come some brief salutations, and the usual final benediction.

In examining the 10th verse we had occasion to admire the beauty with which the spirit of the Christian gentleman revealed itself there in the apostle’s language,—an exquisite freedom from fawning or flattery on the one hand, and from everything like morose or boorish self-assertion on the other. Throughout the passage before us now, every attentive reader is struck

with the same delicate courtesy. You observe, at the very outset, the pleasing way in which, from the digression on contentment that has occupied from the 11th to the 13th verse, he returns at the 14th to the main course of remark : ‘*Notwithstanding*, though I have thus told you of the power which my gracious Lord has given me to cherish equability of spirit in any lot of life, do not allow yourselves for a moment to think that your gift is of little account to me, or other than a source of very great satisfaction. *Ye have well done, in having become partakers* (or, “in having entered into fellowship”) *in my affliction*;—for this last is the precise force of the words rendered in our version ‘*that ye did communicate with my affliction*.’ This ‘participation in the affliction’ was the element in the contribution of the Philippians which made it pleasant to Paul. They were known by him to have such sincere, earnest, loving sympathy—in the strictest sense of that word, ‘feeling along with him’—that, in their prayers, and kind words, and kind deeds, they seemed to him to be actually putting their own shoulders under his burden of trouble, and thus easing him. No higher praise could be bestowed upon their gift, no loftier expression of gratitude employed, than such a testimony as this from Christ’s illustrious servant. Let us remember, brethren, that in every form of effort to do good—whether by giving, or teaching, or speaking words of comfort to sorrowing hearts, or in any other way—we shall be most successful, when the objects of our care feel that there is a real entering of thought and love into their circumstances, and, so far as it is possible, a ‘feeling with them’ of their difficulties and distresses. To our own souls, too, the benefit of such efforts will generally be proportioned to the degree in which there has been in our hearts such a sincere ‘fellowship’ in others’ sufferings.

The expression employed in the 10th verse, ‘Your care of me hath flourished *again*,’ implied a pleasant remembrance of similar kindnesses done to the apostle by the church of Philippi in former days. To these, in the 15th and 16th

verses, he makes more particular reference,—appealing to the knowledge which the Philippians themselves had of the circumstances, and, as is obviously suggested, might thus have, also, of his peculiar satisfaction in the renewal of such sweet communications of Christian love from spiritual children whose early proofs of thoughtful and self-sacrificing affection had greatly cheered him. His mind goes back ten or eleven years to '*the beginning of the gospel*',—so far, that is to say, as regarded Philippi and Europe generally,—the early days of *their* Christian era. He remembered how, when he left Macedonia, pecuniary aid had come to him from Philippi, and from Philippi alone.

The words, '*when I departed from Macedonia*', lead us to suppose that the apostle had in his mind some contribution sent to him just before he left Berea, or when he was on his way to Athens,<sup>1</sup>—a time when, not improbably, he was somewhat low-spirited, from having seen the virulent hostility to the religion of Jesus shown at Thessalonica and Berea by his brethren after the flesh, and when, consequently, the considerate Christian kindness of his friends at Philippi would be felt by him as peculiarly soothing and strengthening. But, while he writes, yet earlier proofs of their love rush in upon his memory, and occupy the foreground, so that the '*For*' of the 16th verse, instead of introducing, as we expect, a specific notice of the gift sent '*when he departed from Macedonia*', brings in an account of help ministered while he was still in the midst of his labours in that region. '*Even in Thessalonica*'—whilst it might not unreasonably have been anticipated that the Philippian believers would still feel confused and dispirited, in consequence of the persecution which had driven Paul from their town—they had '*sent once and again unto his necessity*'.

The evidence given in this little retrospect, of the distinctness and the satisfaction with which the apostle recalled their efforts to help him in former days, could not but be most

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 10–15.

gratifying to the good Philippians. With respect to the sufficiency of their present gift, too, his assurances in the 18th verse are most ample and satisfactory : ‘*Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, I have all that I need ; indeed, I abound,—I am full.*’

In the 15th verse, you will observe, the apostle states that, at the time when he departed from Macedonia, no church except that of Philippi ‘communicated with him,’ or ‘entered into fellowship with him’ ‘as concerning giving and receiving,—more exactly, perhaps, ‘as regarded an account of giving and receiving.’ In these words he shows us the light in which such a transaction as he is speaking of appeared to him, and in which, as he knew, it appeared also to the Philippians. While their gifts were a true and beautiful expression of love to Christ and Christ’s servant, justice had its voice in the matter also. What in legal phraseology is called a ‘deed of gift’ might be, in one aspect, the image from the ordinary life of the world suitable to illustrate the conduct of the apostle’s warm-hearted spiritual children ; in another, an ‘account of giving and receiving’—a ledger, with credit and debit columns or pages—was not unsuitable. Paul had ‘sown unto them spiritual things,—was it a great thing if he should reap their carnal things?’ In ordinary circumstances, if a minister of Christ is at all satisfactorily to edify his people, and exercise pastoral care over them, he must not attempt to conjoin with his ministerial labours worldly means of earning a livelihood. The church, therefore, to whose interests he gives his energies, is clearly bound in justice to provide for his support. ‘Do ye not know,’ Paul asks the Corinthians, ‘that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple ; and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar ? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.’ The Philippians understood all this ; and felt that in giving, according to their ability, for the temporal comfort of him who had brought to them the know-

ledge of ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ,’ and who had in every way devoted himself so heartily to the promotion of their spiritual interests, they were displaying justice as well as love.

It is of the very highest importance, however, for a Christian minister, that he exhibit no ground for any suspicion, on the part of his people, that he labours among them merely or mainly for temporal reward,—but distinct proof that ‘he seeks not theirs, but them.’ In so far as a man is believed to have had himself ‘put into one of the priest’s offices, that he may eat a piece of bread,’ his influence for spiritual good is destroyed. ‘Observe then,’ says the apostle in the 17th verse, ‘that the warmth of my acknowledgment of your past and present kindness to me is *not because I desire a gift.*’

I do not know that to an attentive reader anything in the Epistle more conclusively proves Paul’s singular confidence in the Christian intelligence and right feeling of the Philippians, than the slightness and casual nature of this remark, on a point about which he was peculiarly sensitive. In his intense anxiety to remain absolutely free from any suspicion of worldliness, he, in many places, whilst constantly maintaining the duty of believers to support their ministers, abstained personally from asking or receiving pecuniary aid. The circumstances in which he was placed,—surrounded by virulent opponents waiting eagerly for any opportunity of charging him with self-seeking,—seemed to him to make this the right course. To the Thessalonians he writes, ‘Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail, for, labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.’ To the Corinthians, after giving them that explicit teaching regarding what ‘the Lord hath ordained’ on the subject of ministerial support, which I quoted a little ago, he goes on thus,—‘But I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man

should make my glorying void.' To the elders of Ephesus, convened at Miletus, he said, 'I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel : yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.' But the gifts of the Philippians he accepted freely ; and the only reference he thinks it needful to make to the possibility of any thought entering their minds of his being at all under the influence of selfish motives, is this quiet 'Not that I desire a gift.' He knew his whole life to be such an ample exposition and confirmation of this statement, and to be so well understood as such by his beloved Philippians, that he had no need to say anything further on the subject.

These words lead into the presentation of another, and a most important, aspect of Christian giving. 'Not that I desire a gift,' he says, '*but I desire fruit that may abound to your account*',—more exactly, 'the fruit which abounds to your account' from every such contribution to the cause of Christ. The image of the account-book comes up here again, you observe, but in another connection. Every act of genuine piety is like the sowing of seed, which 'in that day,' and throughout eternity, will yield rewards of grace. Of these 'fruits' God has an 'account,' 'a book of remembrance,' for every one of His people. For gifts from his spiritual children Paul had but little desire, in so far as their ministering to his own comfort was concerned ; but for the sake of his converts themselves he desired such gifts exceedingly, that the record of enduring 'fruits' of glory and joy, yielded by 'faith working by love,' might be full.

The closing words of the 18th verse exhibit the basis on which rested the apostle's assurance that 'fruits' of glorious reward would spring from liberality. He knew that such a gift as his friends had sent him, suggested by a true and ardent love to Christ—to Christ's people—to Christ's work,—was looked upon by their Father in heaven with gracious approval, —was '*an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-*

*pleasing to God.'* These expressions are as nearly as possible equivalent to each other. We read in the 8th chapter of Genesis, that Noah, after coming out of the ark, 'bullded an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar, and the Lord *smelled a sweet savour;*' and frequently elsewhere, throughout the Old Testament, the same phrase is employed to describe the acceptance of a sacrifice. In the New Testament, it is used of the great propitiation: 'Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.' And, in Christ, His people's thank-offering of holy thoughts and affections—holy activity and liberality and patience—is 'an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.'

The doctrine of these words, you observe, is that giving for the cause of Christ is *worship*—acceptable worship. It belongs to the same class of acts as the presentation of sacrifices under the old economy, which was the central act of worship. The same representation of giving is found, you will remember, also in the Epistle to the Hebrews,—'To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased' (Heb. xiii. 16). Worship is the direct expression to God, in any way, of the love, and trust, and devotion of His moral creatures. The grateful Christian heart, recognising in all its powers, and possessions, and opportunities, gifts of God, finds everywhere materials for dedication to Him,—for sacrifice,—for worship. The sincere surrender of the whole life to God is represented and attested by the conscious, definite, direct surrender of somewhat, in the exercise of the powers, and employment of the possessions. The lips are, of necessity, much engaged with the matters of this world; but 'the sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name,' is an acknowledgment that the lips are His. Our time is, of necessity, largely given to the business of earth; but sincerely and gladly to give the Lord the Sabbath Day, is to worship Him with our time. The case is similar

with money. Our Master has instituted ordinances for fostering the spiritual life of His people,—some of which cannot, in ordinary circumstances, be maintained without money. He has given to His church the duty and privilege of spreading the knowledge of His salvation throughout the world. He has told us to ‘consider the poor.’ No intelligent Christian, then, who ponders the matter, can doubt either the reasonableness and the needfulness, or the appointed way, of worshipping God with his money—‘honouring the Lord with his substance.’

But ah! my brethren, worldliness often deafens us to the call of duty in this matter. We are prone to act as if we thought that, after all, what we possess is our own, and not God’s,—forgetting that not merely by every original right are we and all we have entirely His, but that Christians are their Lord’s by a new and glorious and most tender right, being ‘bought with a price.’ From the frequency with which our Lord speaks on the subject, we see the importance which He attaches to our considering ourselves as not proprietors, but stewards for God, of all that we have. Forgetfulness of this, and of what it involves, is the true root of all sin in this matter. ‘It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful;’ and the main elements of faithfulness are the cherishing always of a full sense that the property in his hands is not his own, but his master’s, and constantly acting in reference to it with a view to the advancement of his master’s interests. Now, our stewardship for God extends to all our means of glorifying Him—all our ‘talents,’ whether five, or two, or but one. With regard to them all, self-denial is needed for faithful discharge of duty. The steward of a rich man peculiarly requires self-restraint if his master is at a distance, or exercises but a slight supervision. How strong, then, are the temptations with which even true believers have to struggle, dealing, as we do, with the entrusted goods of a God who reveals Himself to faith and not to sight,—a faith, alas, which, amid

the attractions and distractions of sense, is not seldom dim of vision, and which permits us often to think of Him as far away, ‘though He be not far from every one of us!’ For the proper use of no talent is self-denial more needed than for that of money; because the old nature deems this its peculiar glory, its unfailing spring of happiness. Serious and steady consideration of duty, and severe restraint of nature’s tendencies to self-seeking, are here therefore peculiarly needful; and with respect to no department of stewardship is failure more common among Christians. ‘The deceitfulness of riches chokes the word.’

The grand counteractive to this evil tendency is thoughtful and prayerful contemplation of the marvels of divine grace. As we grow in experimental acquaintance with that ‘love which passeth knowledge,’ the sense of *privilege* becomes ever more prominent, in connection with every form of worship. In this, worship with money fully shares. It comes to be held as a joy—as that use of money which, of all uses, yields immeasurably the greatest happiness—to give to Him who gave Himself for us. We discern more clearly that no claim on our wealth, itself His own gift, can by possibility be more reasonable than His who, ‘though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.’ With growing spirituality, we learn to appreciate also more accurately the *necessity* for liberal expenditure on the work of Christ. Rejoicing in our own light and liberty of soul, we recognise more distinctly the gloom of the darkness, and the terribleness of the bondage, in which sin keeps such vast multitudes of our fellows. The ear is opened to hear, alike from the dens of ignorance and wickedness in our own cities, and from the regions of heathenism and superstition abroad, a cry for help, of intense pathos and power.

How sweetly persuasive, too, is the assurance which the apostle has given us here of ‘fruit abounding to the account’ of every one who, in sincere love, gives to the Saviour! Liberality for

Christ is a holy prudence, in which duty and the highest interest kiss each other. The more faithful the steward is in giving God His own, the more is he laying up for himself 'a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not.' What we spend on ourselves, passes away from us ; what we spend for Christ, we shall find again. Or, according to that most winning exhibition of the case by our Lord,—to lay out the 'mammon of unrighteousness' in aiding our brethren, and in winning souls, is thereby to 'make to ourselves friends, who, when we fail, shall receive us into everlasting habitations.' True and powerful friends, assuredly. Many of them we know not, and shall never know in this life. Yet all the richest and strongest influences of friendship are acting for our highest good from every soul that ever, in true Christian love, we have been privileged to succour. As of old, so still 'the Lord sits over against the treasury, and beholds how the people cast money into the treasury.' Marking also the destination and the effect of all the gifts, He sees all the 'friends' who are 'made' thereby. Now too, as then, the greatness of the gifts in His sight accords not with their value in man's finance, but with the greatness of the love and devotion from which they spring. Let the 'poor widow,' then, who, in glowing love to her Redeemer, and profound pity for perishing souls, has cast in what men call but a little offering, know that the offering is great in His sight, 'an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.' And the 'friends' she has made by her offering help her mightily. Every prayer which rises from the hearts of those who, by the city or foreign missionary she has helped to support, have been turned to God, or strengthened in holy purpose,—every aspiration of gratitude which ascends from homes that through the influence of the gospel, proclaimed by him, have been made happy,—will drop as a genial and refreshing rain of blessing on her. And, at the last, 'when she 'faileth,' these 'friends' 'will receive her into everlasting habitations,'—Jesus looking upon her with a smile of ineffable love, as He

welcomes her home, and says, ‘Inasmuch as thou didst it unto one of the least of these My brethren, thou didst it unto Me.’

That this is the line in which the apostle’s own thoughts are running, is shown us by the great assurance in the 19th verse, ‘*But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.*’ Most of the Christians in Philippi, like most Christians in all ages, were poor. The apostle, having occasion, in writing to the Corinthians, to speak of a former contribution made by the church of Philippi, along with the other churches of Macedonia, for another Christian object, says, ‘The abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.’ He knew that the same was the case with respect to the present gift. ‘Now,’ says he, ‘for your loving ministry to my need I cannot repay you. But *my God will repay you,—He whose I am, and whom I serve, and who looks with a Father’s interest on everything that concerns me.* According to *His riches in glory—the plenitude of power, and wisdom, and grace, which constitutes His glory, and makes Him to all His creatures the Fountain of all blessing—He shall supply all your need, in Christ Jesus,*—in whom He has reconciled you to Himself, and regards you with complacency and love.’

The primary reference of this promise seems to me to be undoubtedly to supply for temporal need. This is shown by the whole tenor of the context, and particularly by the distinct allusion in ‘*all your need*’ to ‘*my necessity*,’ or ‘*need*’ (the same word in the original), of the 16th verse. The apostle’s declaration, then, is, in substance, that through God’s kindness the generous Philippians will find themselves none the poorer for their care of him. They will have proof that ‘there is that scattereth and yet increaseth,’—that, if we ‘seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,’ all other things which are truly good for us ‘shall be added unto us,’—that ‘godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of

the life that now is,' as well as 'of that which is to come.' But observe, that it is our '*need*' which is to be supplied,—not every desire, which may be of mere nature. 'No good thing will He withhold.'

It is clear, however, to the spiritually-minded reader, that Paul's assurance, while pointing in the first instance to temporal blessings, reaches—and by him, and by the Divine Spirit speaking through him, was meant to reach—far beyond these. In ministering to the apostle's physical wants, the Philippians had, at the same time, 'supplied a need' of his heart. It is evident from the whole tone of the Epistle that God had made their gift a most efficient instrument of cheering His servant amid the dispiriting influences of his imprisonment. Like need of the Philippians, in all its length and breadth, their heavenly Father would supply. They would find that, in the richest sense of the word, 'the liberal soul was made fat, and he that watered was watered also himself.' Spiritually, as well as temporally, 'they were poor and needy, yet the Lord thought upon them,' and, 'according to His riches in glory, would supply all their need, in Christ Jesus.' Hungering and thirsting, they would receive of their Father the bread and the water of life. Wandering at times, in ignorance and folly, from the fold, they would by 'the Good Shepherd' be brought back to safety and peace. Sorrowing, they would find in Him 'the Consolation of Israel.' Weak, they would have ever fresh experience that He is 'the Strength of Israel.' 'There is no want to them that fear the Lord.'

My brethren, how sublime, how imperial, is the position of God's saints, as illustrated in Paul here! A prisoner, in chains, needing pecuniary aid from his friends, who themselves are very poor,—he looks calmly up, beyond the prison, beyond the sky, to the treasure-house of the great King, to the King Himself, already stretching forth His hand to reward the helpers of His servant, and this with the fulness of divine munificence, 'according to His riches in glory.' How utterly

insignificant the glory of earth is, or its power, in the light of such a scene as this! Nero can imprison this man, or behead him; but the prisoner can say, ‘All things are mine—the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come,—all are mine, for I am Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’

The sweet assurance of the 19th verse leads most naturally into a doxology, which—also most naturally after the reference made to the paternal care that ‘supplies all the need’ of believers—assumes the form of praise to ‘*God and our Father*,’ or rather, ‘our God and Father.’

The salutations are brief and comprehensive. The apostle desires his affectionate greetings ‘*in Christ Jesus*’ (for these words are probably to be taken with ‘*salute*’) to be given to all the members of the church. ‘*Every saint*’ was to consider himself remembered by Paul with sincere regard. ‘Similar kind wishes are sent also,’ he adds, ‘*by the brethren which are with me*,’—that is, evidently, as in the 2nd verse of the 1st chapter of Galatians, those ministers who at the time were closely associated with him, and ‘*labouring in the gospel*’ under his direction. With the exception of Timothy, whom the references made to him in the 2nd chapter lead us to think of as in Rome when the Epistle was written, we cannot definitely determine the persons meant,—for in all likelihood the apostle’s companions varied at different periods of his imprisonment. Still further, ‘*all the saints*’ who were aware that Paul was writing to the church of Philippi, wished to have their loving greetings given. Many of them might never have seen any of the Philippian Christians, but they knew the closeness of their relation to them in the common Lord, and delighted to hail them as brethren. Specially affectionate salutations were sent by ‘*them of Cæsar’s household*’ who were believers. What a triumph of divine grace these words bring before us, my friends,—the gospel, which is ‘*the power of God unto salvation*,’ known and loved in the house of that emperor whose name has become for all generations

a by-word for cruelty and universal wickedness! The expression, ‘they that are of Cæsar’s household,’ may designate either kinsfolk of Nero, or servants in the palace. It is certainly improbable that so many near relatives of the emperor should have yielded themselves to Christ, as to be described by this phrase; and it seems hardly natural to suppose a combination of these two classes grouped under the one head. In all likelihood, therefore, the apostle’s reference is to servants holding more or less important positions in the imperial household, some of them, no doubt, slaves. It is not unreasonable to think that, as Paul had been sent to Rome because, from the jurisdiction of a provincial governor, he had ‘appealed unto Cæsar,’ and consequently, while awaiting the decision of his case, was under the charge of the commander of the emperor’s body-guard, servants of the palace might frequently have opportunities of meeting him, and hearing his teaching. One can easily suppose, too, that in the close intercourse with the apostle thus permitted by their position, those of them who became ‘obedient to the faith’ might hear from him more regarding the high Christian excellence of the members of the church of Philippi, which was so dear to him, than could be known to the saints in Rome generally. This may account for their being ‘chiefly’ wishful that the apostle would send to the Philippian brethren the expression of their warm regards.

Paul closes the letter, according to his custom, with a solemn and affectionate benediction,—‘*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all,*’—or, according to another reading, which has better manuscript authority, and which is found also in the closing doxology of several of the other Epistles, ‘*be with your spirit.*’ ‘May His favour be manifested to you, especially in enriching the noblest element of your nature with His choicest blessings,—in making you to grow in spiritual wisdom, and energy, and beauty, and happiness!’ ‘Amen.’



REVISED TRANSLATION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

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- I. 1 PAUL and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the  
2 bishops and deacons. Grace *be* unto you, and peace,  
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
3, 4 I thank my God on all my remembrance of you, always,  
in every supplication of mine for you all, presenting the  
5 supplication with joy, for your fellowship with regard to  
6 the gospel from the first day until now ; being confident  
of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good  
work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus ;  
7 even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, be-  
cause I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in  
my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the  
8 gospel ye are all partakers with me of my grace. For  
God is my witness, how I long after you all in the  
tender heart of Christ Jesus.  
9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet  
10 more and more in knowledge and all discernment, so  
that ye may try the things which differ, that ye may be  
pure and free from stumbling against the day of Christ,  
11 being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is  
through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

12 But I would have you know, brethren, that my  
 matters have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of  
 13 the gospel ; so that in all the prætorium, and to all the  
 14 rest, my bonds are become manifest *as* in Christ, and  
 that the more part of the brethren, being confident in  
 the Lord through my bonds, are more exceedingly bold  
 15 to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach  
 Christ even for envy and strife, but some also for good  
 16 will. The<sup>1</sup> one *party* of love, knowing that I am set  
 17 for the defence of the gospel, but the other of factious-  
 ness proclaim Christ, not sincerely, thinking to raise up  
 18 galling to my bonds. What then ? Notwithstanding,  
 every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is  
 proclaimed ; and therein I rejoice, yea, and shall re-  
 19 joice ; for I know that this shall issue to me unto salva-  
 tion, through your supplication and the supply of the  
 20 Spirit of Jesus Christ,—according to my earnest longing  
 and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame, but  
 that in all boldness, as always, *so* now also, Christ shall  
 be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

21, 22 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if  
 I live in the flesh, this *is* to me fruit of labour ; and what  
 23 I shall choose I wot not ; but I am in a strait betwixt  
 the two, having my desire toward departing and being  
 24 with Christ, for it *is* better by very far ; but to abide in  
 25 the flesh *is* more needful on your account. And, being  
 persuaded of this, I know that I shall abide and con-  
 tinue with you all for your furtherance and joy in your  
 26 faith ; that your matter of glorying' may abound in  
 Christ Jesus through me, by my presence with you  
 again.

27 Only, live as becometh the gospel of Christ, that  
 whether I come and see you, or be absent, I may hear

<sup>1</sup> In the oldest manuscripts the 16th and 17th verses are found in the re-  
 verse order from that followed in our Authorized Version.

of your affairs, that ye are standing fast in one spirit,  
with one soul striving together for the faith of the  
28 gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries ;  
the which is to them a token of perdition, but of your  
29 salvation, and this of God : for unto you it hath been  
given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on  
30 Him, but also to suffer in His behalf, having the same  
conflict as ye saw in me, and now hear of in me.

- II. 1 If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any  
2 tender-heartedness and compassions, fill ye up my joy,  
that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, with  
3 united souls minding the one thing ; *doing* nothing ac-  
cording to factiousness or vainglory, but in lowliness  
of mind esteeming each other better than yourselves ;  
4 looking not each on your own things, but each also on  
5 the things of others. For have that mind in you, which  
6 was also in Christ Jesus ; who, being in the form of  
God, thought it not a prize to be on equality with God,  
7 but emptied Himself, taking upon Him the form of a  
8 servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and, being  
found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becom-  
ing obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross ;  
9 wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave Him  
10 a name which is above every name, that in the name of  
Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and  
11 *things* on earth, and *things* under the earth, and *that*  
every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.  
12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye always obeyed, *so*, not  
as in my presence only, but now much more in my  
absence, work out your own salvation with fear and  
13 trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to  
14 will and to work, of His good pleasure. Do all things  
15 without murmurings and disputings, that ye may ap-

prove yourselves blameless and guileless, children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the  
16 world, holding forth the word of life ; that I may have matter of glorying *laid up* for me against the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain, neither labour in vain.

17 Yea, and if, besides the sacrifice and service of your faith, I be poured forth, I joy, and congratulate you all ;  
18 and for the same cause do ye also joy, and congratulate me.

19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort,  
20 when I know your state. For I have no man like-  
21 minded, who will truly care for your state. For all *of them* seek their own, not the things which are Jesus  
22 Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child *serveth* a father, he served with me for the furtherance  
23 of the gospel. Him, therefore, I hope to send imme-  
24 diately on my seeing how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 But I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and fellow-labourer, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and minister to my  
26 need ; seeing that he was longing after you all, and full of heaviness because ye had heard that he had been  
27 sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death ; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I should not have sorrow upon sorrow.  
28 I have been, therefore, the more earnest to send him, that, seeing him, ye may rejoice again, and that I my-  
29 self may be the less sorrowful. Receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness ; and hold such in reputa-  
30 tion ; because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, having hazarded his life to supply your lack in your service toward me.

III. 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me *is* not irksome, and for you *is* safe.

2 Beware of the dogs; beware of the evil workers;

3 beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the

4 flesh;—though I myself might have confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinketh that he might

5 put confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the

6 law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the

7 law, having approved myself blameless. But what things were gains to me, those for Christ I have counted

8 loss. Yea, doubtless, and I *still* count them all to be loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all, and count them to be dung, that I may win Christ,

9 and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God,

10 resting on faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings,

11 being fashioned after the likeness of His death,—if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the

12 dead. Not that I have already taken hold, either am already perfected; but I follow after, if that I may even lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by

13 Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold; but one thing,—forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are

14 before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded ; and, if in anything ye are otherwise minded, 16 this also God shall reveal unto you. Only, whereto we have attained, by the same let us walk.

17 Be followers together of me, brethren, and mark them 18 which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping,—the enemies of the cross of Christ ; 19 whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and their glory in their shame, who mind the earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in the heavens, from whence also 21 we look for the Lord Jesus Christ *as* a Saviour ; who shall change the body of our humiliation, *that it may be* fashioned like unto the body of His glory, according to the working of His power even to subdue all things

IV. 1 unto Himself. Wherefore, my brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

2 I beseech Euodia, and I beseech Syntyche, to be of 3 the same mind in the Lord. Yea, I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help them, seeing that they laboured with me in the gospel, along with Clement also, and my other fellow-workers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway : again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The 6 Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious about nothing ; but in everything by your prayer and your supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto 7 God : and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* seemly, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely,

whatsoever things *are* of good report ; whatever virtue *there is*, and whatever praise ; think on these things,—  
9 which also ye learned and received, and heard and saw in me. These things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have flourished again as to your care for me ; for which ye were also careful, but lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have  
12 learned, in what state I am, *therein* to be content. I know both *how* to be abased,—I know also *how* to abound ; in all and everything I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer  
13 want. I can do all things in Him which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding, ye did well that ye had fellowship  
15 with my affliction. And ye yourselves also know, Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me as touching an account of giving and receiving,  
16 but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once  
17 and again unto my need. Not that I seek your gift,— but I seek the fruit which aboundeth to your account.

18 But I have all things, and abound ; I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice ac-  
19 ceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall fully supply all your need, according to His riches in glory,  
20 in Christ Jesus. Now unto our God and Father *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which  
22 are with me salute you. All the saints salute you, but especially they that are of Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.  
Amen.



## NOTES ON THE GREEK TEXT.

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### CHAPTER I.

VER. 1. The designation δοῦλοι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is, in itself, general—applicable to all Christians: compare Rev. ii. 20, vii. 3. Official position in the church is suggested by the connection merely. This expression has no altogether adequate representative in our language. As distinguished from ὑπηρέτης and διάκονος, it implies absoluteness and permanence of subjection. ‘Bondsman,’ ‘bond-servant,’ and the like, express these ideas; but bring in also the degrading associations of slavery.

The omission of the article before ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις accords with a frequent usage in cases where two or more nouns, *obviously* definite, are joined by conjunctions. This usage is sufficiently accounted for by ‘the tendency of colloquial language to unburden itself of particles which may, without serious ambiguity, be dispensed with’ (*Green’s Grammar of the New Testament*, p. 46); and the naturalness of the omission of the article in this particular class of cases is illustrated by the fact that our English idiom also, under the same circumstances, often allows the omission. Compare, for example, Matt. x. 28, καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι, ‘to destroy both soul and body;’ Matt. x. 37, ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα, ‘he that loveth father or mother;’ also with plurals (as in the place before us); Acts xxi. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 22.

3. The presence of the article in πάσῃ τῇ μνείᾳ ὑμῶν makes

it necessary to translate, not, as in our version, ‘every remembrance of you,’ but ‘all my remembrance of you.’ Ἐπὶ, in the connection, means, therefore, not ‘on the occasion of,’ but ‘on the ground of.’

4. We may construe ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν either with the preceding or the following words,—thus, either ‘always, in every prayer of mine for you all, presenting the prayer with joy,’ according to the connection adopted by our translators; or ‘always, in every prayer of mine, presenting the prayer for you all with joy.’ The former seems to me preferable. The article with δέησιν might, no doubt, mean ‘the prayer which you know well I do offer for you all;’ but appears to refer more naturally to the previous δεήσει, as already limited by ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν. Again, the course of thought requires us, apparently, to give μετὰ χαρᾶς considerable emphasis,—and this, according to the construction followed in our version, these words have, standing at the beginning of the second half of the clause; while the other connection gives them a position altogether unemphatic.

5. Ἐπὶ here may be taken as parallel to ἐπὶ of the 3rd verse, introducing a statement of the subject of the μνείᾳ there mentioned. This connection, however, is too remote and artificial for the style of Paul. The view, obviously entertained by our translators, that this verse is in immediate dependence on μετὰ χαρᾶς of the 4th,—with, of course, a dependence also, but more remote, on εὐχαριστῶ of the 3rd,—is more natural and satisfactory.

*Koinonia eis tō euagγēliōv* means ‘fellowship unto—towards—for the furtherance of—the gospel.’ The expression is, in itself, quite general; and there is nothing in the context to suggest a limited reference,—rather the contrary, particularly in the 7th verse, which seems to be in a measure parallel to this. Paul’s thought, therefore, as it appears to me, when fully exhibited, is this,—‘your fellowship of feeling and effort with each other, with me, with all believers, for the advancement of

the Saviour's cause,—all springing from fellowship with Him.' Sometimes in the New Testament, as, for example, in Rom. xv. 26, and Heb. xiii. 16, *κοινωνία* denotes specifically one very beautiful form in which the spirit of Christian fellowship may display itself, namely almsgiving, 'communicating' with the need of poor brethren. Considering that the apostle had recently received from the Philippians a pecuniary contribution, and, as his warm acknowledgments in the last chapter show, had been much gratified by their thoughtful kindness, it is natural to think that this use of the word was in his mind when he wrote it here. But the whole context appears to show that, if intended at all, this reference lies in the background only.

The non-repetition of the article *τῆς* before *εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* is to be explained by the writer's having before his mind *κοινωνίᾳ εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* as one thought, so that the one article covers the whole, like the co-efficient of bracketed quantities in algebra : Winer, *Gram.* § 20. 2, b. Then the specification of time, *ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας ἔχρι τοῦ νῦν*, is attached to *κοινωνίᾳ εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* without an article, because the mind very naturally construes such a noun as *κοινωνία* in the same way as the verb *κοινωνεῖν*, to which the adverbial expression joins itself on directly. As Ellicott observes, too, 'the insertion of the article would give the duration of the *κοινωνία* a far greater prominence than the apostle seems to have intended.' The omission of the article before *πρώτης* is in accordance with a pretty frequent usage in the case of ordinal numerals, in which obviously, as a rule, no ambiguity is caused by its absence : Winer, § 19. 2, b.

3-5. Dr. Lightfoot takes a peculiar view of the construction of this passage. Regarding *μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος* as a parenthesis, he connects the rest of the 4th verse, and the whole of the 5th, immediately with *εὐχαριστῶ*,—translating thus, 'I thank my God for you all at all times, as I think of you, whosoever I pray for you (and these prayers I

offer with joy), for that you have co-operated with me,' etc. His reasons are, that 'the structure of the passage is dislocated, and its force weakened, by disconnecting clauses pointed out so obviously as correlative by the repetition of the same word, πάση, πάντοτε, πάση, πάντων ;' and that there is 'great awkwardness' in having ἐν πάσῃ δέήσει and τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος in one clause. The question seems, therefore, to be almost wholly one of the balance and force of the sentence, read according to the one or the other construction ; and I cannot persuade myself that Dr. Lightfoot's is in any way preferable to that followed in our version. The ordinary construction seems to me very much the more simple and natural, and to give more elegance and lightness of movement to the sentence, with quite as much force.

6. Αὐτὸν τοῦτο is an accusative of reference,—'with regard to this very thing.' Often in the New Testament, in the writings of Paul and John particularly, we find a demonstrative pronoun placed, as here, before a clause with ὅτι, ἵνα, or the like, to give it special prominence : Winer, § 23. 5. The αὐτὸν added to τοῦτο suggests a reference to something expressed or implied in what has preceded ; compare Col. iv. 8 ; Gal. ii. 10 ; 2 Pet. i. 5. Here, I apprehend, the reference is to the subject of the prayer spoken of in the 4th verse. The apostle is continuing his statement of the ground of his 'joy' in praying for them, and of his gratitude to God for them ; and the course of thought is this,—'With joy, I say, I present my prayer for you, being confident with regard to this very thing for which chiefly, as you well know, I ask God on your behalf, namely that,' etc.

In ἔργον ἀγαθὸν there is obviously a reference to 'the fellowship for the furtherance of the gospel,' spoken of in the 5th verse. The omission of the article shows distinctly enough, however, as it appears to me, that the reference is not meant to be definite and exclusive. Rather, by the general expression, 'a good work,' the apostle designates that of which the 'fellowship' is one very beautiful fruit,—vital godliness.

7. The subject of *ἐχειν* may be either *με* or *ὑμᾶς*. The latter view is supported by Rosenmüller, Storr, Conybeare, Alford, in one of his books,<sup>1</sup> and others; and is certainly tenable, in so far as the language merely is concerned. But the former construction is the more natural according to the arrangement of the words, and seems to accord better with the line of thought,—as to which, see the lecture on the passage.

The words from *ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς* to *εὐαγγελίου* may be joined with *ἐχειν με* or with *ὑμᾶς ὄντας*. Chrysostom, Neander, De Wette, Meyer, Alford, and others, approve of the former connection, regarding the words as intended to bring out still more clearly the depth of Paul's affection for the Philippians, seeing that even 'this condition of suffering, and the great duty which he had to discharge in it, could not dislodge them from his heart' (Meyer). But the clause seems to have more relevancy and force, when connected, as in our version, with *ὑμᾶς ὄντας*.

We may regard the *μον* between *συγκοινωνοῦς* and *τῆς χάριτος* as governed by *χάριτος*, or take *συγκοινωνοῦς* as governing both genitives,—the one of the person, the other of the thing. This latter construction is perhaps slightly preferable. The meaning then is, 'partakers with me of the grace' which God gives me for suffering, and for the defence and confirmation of the gospel.

8. 'The *σπλάγχνα* are properly the nobler viscera, the heart, lungs, liver, etc., as distinguished from the *εἰντερα*, the lower viscera, the intestines' (Lightfoot). As here employed, the expression *ἐν σπλάγχνοις* is equivalent to *ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ* of the preceding verse,—only that, according to New Testament use,

<sup>1</sup> In his *Commentary*, Alford says that 'the context clearly shows' Rosenmüller's construction to be wrong. But in his *Authorized Version Revised* (published in 1870), he renders the clause, 'because you have me in your heart.' This may be supposed to exhibit his final judgment on the question.

the idea of *tenderness* is in this even more prominent than in the other.

9. The clause with *ἴνα* obviously explains the *τοῦτο*, stating the substance of the apostle's prayer. It gives us the *purpose* and the *purport* of the prayer conjoined. There is thus a manifest, but a most natural, departure from the pure *telic* force of *ἴνα*; and there are numerous cases in the New Testament in which the divergence from this original use is much greater. See, for example, John xv. 8; Gal. v. 17. Meyer, Alford, and others, who maintain the telic force of the particle everywhere, are driven often to most artificial explanations. Thus on the present passage Alford observes: 'There is an ellipsis in the sense between *τοῦτο* and *ἴνα*,—*τοῦτο* introducing the *substance* of the prayer, *ἴνα* its *aim*.' This appears to me wholly unnatural. Beyond doubt aim is set forth, but involved inseparably with substance. See Winer, § 44. 8; Green, p. 170, foll.

Examining the sentence contained in vers. 9–11, we find that it exhibits a series of aims, each beyond the preceding, and well marked off, through their being introduced alternately by *ἴνα* and *εἰς*. The apostle's prayer is, in purpose and purport, *ἴνα ἡ ἀγάπη περισσεύῃ, κ.τ.λ.* The end he has in view, in asking this, is *εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς, κ.τ.λ.* Of *τὸ δοκιμάζειν* the intent is *ἴνα ἡτε εἰλικρινεῖς, κ.τ.λ.* And the grand ultimate aim is *εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον Θεοῦ.*

In the connection in which *ἡ ἀγάπη* occurs here, it is naturally taken in the widest sense,—as love to God, to each other, to the apostle, to fellow-Christians generally, to the world. The apostle's prayer is, that in his dear Philippians this beautiful grace 'may abound in'—possess abundantly—'knowledge and all judgment,' as her handmaids, helpers, instruments. '*Ἐπίγνωσις*' is 'full knowledge.' Lightfoot well illustrates its force by a reference to 1 Cor. xiii. 12,—'Now I know (*γινώσκω*) in part, but then shall I know (*ἐπιγνώσομαι*) even as also I am known (*ἐπεγνώσθην*'); and says, 'The intensive preposi-

tion before *γνώσαι* answers to the adjective before *αἰσθήσαται*.<sup>1</sup> *Αἰσθησις* is ‘discernment’ or ‘perception’ as to the practical application of the principles with which *ἐπίγνωσις* deals. De Wette excellently calls it ‘moral tact.’ Πάσῃ, pointing to the innumerable occasions in life for the exercise of such a faculty, describes a delicacy of spiritual judgment ready to meet them all.

10. According to New Testament usage, *δοκιμάζειν τὰ διαφέροντα* may mean either ‘to try the things which differ,’ or ‘to approve the things which are excellent.’ Practically, in the connection in which the words occur here, the force is the same, the one being simply a stage leading to the other. The former rendering, in which we have the primitive, or at least an earlier, meaning of both words, is perhaps the more natural and forcible.

*Ἄπρόσκοπος* occurs in the New Testament in only two places besides the present,—in Acts xxiv. 16, with the sense of ‘without stumbling’ (equivalent to *ἀπταιστός*, ‘free from falling,’ in Jude 24), and in 1 Cor. x. 32, where it means ‘not causing stumbling’ to others. In the present passage the former sense is more accordant with the context than the latter,—influence on others not being spoken of.

*Eis ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ* does not seem to mean ‘till the day of Christ,’ but ‘against,’ ‘with a view to,’ ‘looking towards’ it,—that is to say, practically, as Chrysostom puts it, ‘that ye may be found faultless in that day.’ This force of *eis*—which is obviously closely connected with the frequent use of the preposition to express purpose, or is indeed but a case of that use—is very common in the New Testament; whilst a careful examination will show that its use in the sense of ‘till’ simply, as in John xiii. 1, is rare.

11. *Καρπὸν*—which is unquestionably the true reading, *καρπῶν*, of the Received Text, having no uncial authority—is an accusative of reference,—the exact meaning, therefore, being, ‘filled,’ or ‘fully stored,’ ‘as to fruit of righteousness.’ Col. i. 9 contains a similar construction.

**Δικαιοσύνης** may be taken as a genitive either of apposition or of origin. The former is, perhaps, the more natural ; but the sense is substantially the same either way,—the image, however, being differently conceived. See the lecture on the passage.

When, as here, **δόξα** and **ἐπαυτος** are distinguished, the former must be regarded as designating ‘the manifestation of the divine majesty and excellence,’ the latter ‘its recognition and acknowledgment’ by God’s moral creatures.

13. It seems to me that **ώστε** here shows us, incidentally, the pure spiritual atmosphere by which all the apostle’s thinking was surrounded. Looking merely to the *form* of what he has said in the 12th verse, the 13th and 14th rather contain an explanation than exhibit a result. But really uppermost in Paul’s mind, I apprehend, was the thought,—‘Through what seemed likely to obstruct the progress of the gospel in Rome *God has graciously wrought* for its furtherance, *so that*,’ etc.

The position of **φανερὸς** shows clearly that **ἐν Χριστῷ** is to be joined with *it*,—not with **δεσμοὺς**, as has been done by our translators and others ; the meaning being ‘manifest as—or, to be—in Christ,’ that is, ‘as borne in fellowship with Him.’ To all who knew of the apostle’s imprisonment, it was clear that he was in bonds, not for crime in any ordinary sense, but simply for his love to Christ and devotion to His service. By many, doubtless, this was apprehended only in a very vague way ; but the apostle expresses the idea in the formula, dear and familiar to him, which states the case as it really stood, and this with the utmost intensity and sublimity.

The precise meaning of **πραιτώριον** here is uncertain. Originally ‘the tent of a general,’ *prætorium* came naturally enough to be applied to the official residence of a provincial governor, or the palace of a king. These secondary applications are found in the New Testament ; see, for example, John xviii. 28 ; Acts xxiii. 35. Our translators, with many others, have supposed the reference in the passage before us to

be to the palace of Nero. We know from the 22nd verse of the last chapter, that some of 'Cæsar's household' knew Paul; and it is reasonable to suppose, considering the apostle's position as a prisoner who had 'appealed unto Cæsar,' that, in whatever part of Rome he lived, the servants of the palace had specially free intercourse with him. But no certain instance has been adduced from any writer, of the application of the name *prætorium* to the emperor's palace at Rome; which, considering how frequent are the occasions of reference to it, seems to make it probable that that particular palace never was so called. Most modern commentators have been of opinion that the reference here is to the camp of the Prætorian Cohorts,—a camp constructed for them in the immediate neighbourhood of the city by Tiberius. But a similar objection lies against this view; for there is no evidence that the camp was ever known as the *prætorium*. But the brigade of guards itself was unquestionably called by this name, being spoken of as freely under the appellation of the *prætorium* as under that of *prætoriani*. It seems to me therefore, on the whole, that the word has a personal rather than a local meaning here,—'in the prætorian guard, or brigade.' To this view, which is Dr. Lightfoot's, Hackett objects that, in this case, we might have expected the dative without *ἐν*, as in the other clause. But a literal English translation affords an exact analogy,—'my bonds have become manifest (or well known) as in Christ,—in all the regiment, and to all the rest.' The variation of expression, with 'in' and 'to,' is perfectly natural in our language. Equally natural is the variation in the apostle's mode of expression, because *militare* (or *merere*) *in prætorio* was the phrase he heard around him every day, for 'to serve in the guard.' Lightfoot's admirable detached note exhausts the subject. In a case like this, of some uncertainty as to the exact meaning, it seems best in translation to retain the original word 'prætorium.'

Our translators have regarded *τοῖς λοιποῖς πᾶσιν* as governed

by ἐν. This is possible, but hardly natural. It is rather, as they have taken it in their margin, to be put in direct connection with φανεροὺς,—‘to all the rest;’ compare 2 Cor. xiii. 2. ‘To all the rest’ in Rome who knew of Paul’s imprisonment, ‘his bonds were manifest to be in Christ.’ Bengel—referring to 1 Thess. iv. 13, to which Van Hengel, who adopts his view, adds Eph. ii. 3—explains τοῖς λοιποῖς as indicating unbelievers. But this in the connection appears very far from natural.

14. Ἐν Κυρίῳ may be joined either with τῶν ἀδελφῶν or with πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς μον. To the former construction the non-repetition of τῶν constitutes no objection; see note on κοινωνίᾳ εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ver. 5. But this combination does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament; whilst ἐν Κυρίῳ is several times found with forms of πέποιθα; see, for example, chap. ii. 24. Then the paradox πεποιθότας τοῖς δεσμοῖς calls for explanation, which is fully given by ἐν Κυρίῳ,—naturally placed, therefore, in the position of emphasis, at the head of the combination. As usual, ‘in the Lord’ exhibits the sphere or element. It was ‘in Him,’ ‘in union with Him,’ that ‘confidence in Paul’s bonds’ was felt. ‘Bonds’ here is, obviously enough, a terse and pointed expression for all the apostle’s experience in connection with his imprisonment. The brethren had confidence grounded on the sustaining grace which had been granted to him abundantly in his affliction. Πέποιθα with a simple dative, instead of ἐπὶ or ἐν, is found also in Philemon 21, and (of the person) in 2 Cor. x. 7.

15. Meyer takes καὶ in both clauses to mean ‘also;’ but it appears more natural to regard it in the first as meaning ‘even,—that is, ‘strange as it may seem.’

16, 17. According to the authority of MSS., the order in which these verses stand in the Received Text must be reversed. Transposition by copyists was most natural here, to suit the order in which the two classes of preachers are mentioned in verse 15.

We may construe ἐξ ἀγάπης immediately with οἱ μὲν, and ἐξ ἐπιθείας immediately with οἱ δέ, with the sense of ‘they that

are of love,' and 'they that are of factiousness,'—that is, practically, 'the loving,' 'the factious'; compare Rom. ii. 8; Gal. iii. 7; John xviii. 37. The exact meaning of such expressions is, 'they whose starting-point, as regards effort, is love, factiousness,' or the like. Meyer, De Wette, Ellicott, and others, adopt this construction. That followed by our translators, however, with Lightfoot, Alford, Eadie, and others, seems preferable, because on the former view the arrangement of the words in the second clause is hardly natural, *τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλοντι* having the place of emphasis.

*Κεῖμαι* is regarded by Van Hengel and others as here meaning 'lie in a state of suffering.' This is a classical use of the verb; but the sense given by our translators, 'am set,' or 'appointed,' accords better with New Testament usage and with the context. See Luke ii. 34, 1 Thess. iii. 3. In this use *κεῖμαι* is equivalent to the perfect passive of *τίθημι*.

'*Ἐριθεία*' is not to be confounded with *ἐρις*, as has been done by our translators and many other interpreters. The words are expressly distinguished in 2 Cor. xii. 20, Gal. v. 20; and if they are etymologically connected with each other at all, the connection is only remote. '*Ἐριθεία*' is from *ἐριθος*, 'a hired servant,' and therefore means originally 'labouring for wages,' and hence 'self-seeking, factiousness, caballing.'

*Τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλοντι* is not necessary to the construction, seeing that *οἱ μὲν* and *οἱ δὲ* might be in apposition to *τινὲς μὲν* and *τινὲς δὲ* (taken inversely). The apostle, as Dr. Lightfoot acutely suggests, may have repeated the 'preach Christ,' 'to bring out the contrast between the character of the motives of the second class of preachers and the subject of their preaching, for there is a moral contradiction between *ἐριθεία* and *Χριστός*.' No special significance seems to lie in the substitution of *καταγγέλλοντι* for the almost exactly synonymous *κηρύσσοντι*.

Lightfoot thinks that in *θλίψιν ἐγείρειν*, standing in connection with *δεσμοῖς*, we are to recognise an intended reference to

the original meaning of *θλίψις*, ‘pressure, galling.’ This seems in every way probable, and adds point to the clause.

19. The reference of *τοῦτο* has been variously conceived. It does not seem satisfactory to regard it, with Alford and others, as pointing to the preaching of the gospel, thus taking up again the immediately preceding *ἐν τούτῳ*. The repetition of the demonstrative with the same reference is not altogether natural, and the course of thought somewhat obscure. Neither does the sense go smoothly, if we accept Dr. Eadie’s view that the apostle’s ‘joy in the preaching of Christ, from whatever motive,’ is meant. It seems to me that *τοῦτο* refers to what is actually the nearest antecedent thought, namely that, unexpressed but obvious and prominent, at the close of the previous verse,—‘Yea, and will rejoice, *though hatred to me is the moving spring with so many.*’ By *τοῦτο*, I apprehend, is meant the hatred, and—the thought widening out at once before the apostle’s mind—the condition of trouble generally in which he is placed. This, in substance, is the view of Lightfoot, Hackett, and Conybeare.

The words used by the apostle here, *τοῦτο—σωτηρίαν*, are the Septuagint rendering of the first clause of Job xiii. 16. The context there makes it not unlikely that Paul had the passage before his mind.

*Toῦ Πνεύματος* may be either a subjective or an objective genitive,—the meaning of the whole expression being, in the former case, ‘the supply which the Spirit of Jesus Christ gives;’ in the latter, ‘the supply which is the Spirit of Jesus Christ.’ The former seems preferable, because, as Ellicott observes, ‘the parallelism, “the prayers you offer—the aid the Spirit supplies,” is thus more exactly retained.’

The non-repetition of *διὰ τῆς* before *ἐπιχορηγίας* shows a close connection in the apostle’s mind between the gifts of the Spirit and the prayers of his friends. But the view of Meyer, followed by Alford, that we should translate thus, ‘through your prayer and your supply’—by that prayer—‘of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,’

is, as Ellicott clearly shows, though consistent with the construction, not necessarily required by it; and seems far from natural.

20. With regard to the force of *κατὰ, ἀποκαραδοκίαν, ἐλπίδα,* and *αισχυνθήσομαι*, see the lecture on the passage.

As *ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός*, ‘Christ shall be magnified in’ (that is, practically, ‘through the manifestation of’) ‘all boldness,—full boldness under all circumstances,—is connected with *διὰ θανάτου*, as well as with *διὰ ζωῆς*, it appears that the apostle’s thought, in reference to death, is, primarily, of sustaining grace during his last sufferings. The explanation of this part of the statement, in the next verse, ‘To me to die is gain,’ exhibits the hope, through the influence of which, in the hour of death, as he felt well assured, Christ would magnify Himself in him. In the expression, however, the *hope* passes out of view, the sublime fact itself standing forth in prominence, ‘To die is gain.’ Thus the absolute security of the Christian’s hope is suggested,—and the magnifying of Christ through His gloriously faithful fulfilment of His promise to His people of heavenly blessedness.

21. Schenkel, Vaughan, Lightfoot, and others, observe that by passing from the present, *ζῆν*, to the aorist, *ἀποθανεῖν*, the apostle intimates that it is not *dying*, but the *result of death*, which is ‘gain.’ However true this is in itself, and however certainly it would have been implied in the *perfect tense*, it may be doubted whether it can be said strictly to be set forth by the use of the *aorist*. The change of tense corresponds naturally to the difference between the *state* of living and the *act* of dying. Compare 2 Cor. vii. 3, *εἰς τὸ συναποθανεῖν καὶ συνζῆν*. This passage Dr. Lightfoot quotes as favouring his view of the meaning, rendering it by ‘to be with you in death and in life.’ But this ‘to be with you in death’ is ambiguous. Does not the apostle mean simply, ‘to die with you,’ ‘to be with you when dying,’ rather than ‘to be with you when dead,’—which latter sense would be required by Dr. Lightfoot’s argument? Compare Mark xiv. 31, and Acts xxv. 11.

22. Various constructions of this verse have been proposed. Of these, two only seem worthy of serious examination. We may regard the protasis as running on to *ἔργον*, *τοῦτο* simply summing up what precedes it, and *καὶ*, with the force of the logical ‘then,’ introducing the apodosis: thus,—‘But if I live in the flesh, (if) this is fruit of labour to me,—then what I shall choose I wot not.’ This, with some variations of detail, has commended itself to very many commentators. The other construction is that of our translators, and of Bengel, Peirce, Vaughan, and others,—according to which *τοῦτο* begins the apodosis. To me the latter seems decidedly the preferable. The only difficulty in it lies in our having to supply, in the protasis, some such words as *ἔστι μου*, ‘be my lot.’ Now, though this ellipsis would be harsh in ordinary writing, its occurrence in a passage like the present, which is, most obviously, one very much of musing aloud, appears not unnatural. Granting this supplement,—all the rest of the sentence goes smoothly enough. To the other construction the somewhat formal use of *τοῦτο* which it supposes, presents an objection, as hardly natural in a ‘musing.’ The chief ground of doubt with regard to this construction, however, lies in the sense given to *καὶ*. No example of a precisely similar use of this particle has been adduced from the New Testament; and in classical writers it seems to be poetical.

*Γνωρίζειν* means ‘to discern,’—or ‘to make known.’ In classical writers the former sense appears to be the more common; but in the New Testament, in every place where the word occurs except the present, it has the second meaning. In its connection here, however, it cannot naturally bear any sense but ‘discern,’ ‘see clearly.’

23. ‘Ἐκ τῶν δύο means ‘in consequence of the two.’

Double comparatives, like *μᾶλλον κρείστον*, occur in Mark vii. 36; 2 Cor. vii. 13. See Winer, § 35.

25. For the construction *τοῦτο πεποιθώς*, compare note on ver. 6 above. Some commentators, joining *πεποιθώς* closely to

*οἶδα*, make *τοῦτο* the object of *οἶδα*,—thus, ‘of this I am confidently persuaded, that,’ etc. The construction adopted by our translators appears by far the more natural.

*Μένειν* is ‘to stay;’ *παραμένειν*, ‘to stay with,’ or ‘at.’ Having no similar compound in English, we cannot adequately exhibit the beauty of the transition, prompted by the apostle’s loving heart, from the absolute ‘stay,’ to the relative ‘stay with you.’ In 1 Cor. xvi. 6, *παραμένειν* is construed with *πρὸς*; but in Gen. xliv. 33, the LXX. has it with the dative, as here.

*Προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν* both govern *τῆς πίστεως* and *ὑμῶν*,—‘for your furtherance and joy in your faith.’ The force of the genitive *πίστεως* is not altogether the same, when looked at in its relations to the one governing substantive and to the other; but the construction is quite simple and natural.

26. Our translators regarded *καύχημα* in many places as equivalent to *καύχησις*. A careful examination of the passages in the New Testament in which it occurs, however, shows clearly that, probably in all, certainly in almost all, it has the sense properly belonging to a noun in *-μα*,—not ‘glorying,’ but ‘matter, or ground, of glorying.’ So here. The reference is fully explained in the lecture on the passage.

The position of the words indicates that neither *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* nor *ἐν ἐμοὶ* is in immediate dependence on *καύχημα*, but that both stand connected with the verb *περισσεύγη*. *Ἐν ἐμοὶ*, in whatever way the figure involved in the preposition be conceived, seems to mean practically ‘through me.’ Compare Matt. ix. 34; Acts iv. 9, xvii. 31; Eph. iv. 30. See Winer, § 48. a, d. Into this use of *ἐν* here the apostle might naturally be led by *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* immediately preceding. Here, as often, that expression has obviously very much the force of ‘*through your being in Christ*.’ Now, though this sense lies in the connection rather than in the phrase itself, yet, as it seems to me, it might to some extent lead the way into the use of *ἐν ἐμοὶ* with very nearly the force of *δι’ ἐμοῦ*.

27. *Πολιτεύεσθε* means, in a general way, ‘conduct your-

selves,'—but strictly, ‘exercise your (Christian) citizenship.’ The peculiar impressiveness of this word, as addressed to the Philippians, is illustrated in the lecture on the passage. Compare Polycarp’s *Epistle*, § 5.

In the second clause there are slight irregularities of construction. Carried on according to its beginning, it would have run thus: *ἴνα, εἴτε ἐλθὼν καὶ ἴδων ὑμᾶς, εἴτε ἀπὼν καὶ ἀκούων, μάθω, κ.τ.λ.*, or the like. Again, for ‘that I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast,’ we expect rather something like, ‘that, as regards your affairs, I may hear this, that,’ etc. Some commentators accordingly explain *τὰ* as equivalent to *ταῦτα*; others, as an accusative of reference, ‘as regards your affairs.’ But neither is natural; and the true explanation seems to be, that the apostle’s love takes it as certain that their spiritual state will be such as he is about to describe,—so that to ‘your affairs’ the ‘that,’ or ‘namely that,’ attaches itself directly.

*Στήκω*, as used by Paul, has the idea of *firmness* very prominent; see 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Gal. v. 1; 1 Thess. iii. 8.

Lightfoot, following Erasmus, regards *πίστει* as personified, and as governed by the *σὺν* of *συναθλοῦντες*,—translating thus, ‘striving in concert with the faith.’ The construction adopted by our translators, according to which *πίστει* is a dative of advantage, appears to me very much more simple and natural. The general Pauline usage suggests that ‘faith’ is probably to be taken here as subjective, not objective.

28. The antecedent of *ἥτις* is the previous clause, *μὴ πτυρόμενοι, κ.τ.λ.*, the gender being through attraction to the predicate *ἐνδειξις*: compare Mark xv. 16; 1 Tim. iii. 15. The compound relative has here, as occasionally, something of the force of ‘since, seeing that;’ compare Eph. iii. 13. On Gal. iv. 24, Ellicott has a long and very excellent note on the uses of *ὅστις*.

29. In the aorist *ἔχαρισθη* the apostle looks back to the first bestowment of the boon, and refers to it simply as an historical

fact. According to our idiom, however, in a case like this, the natural translation is by the perfect, ‘has been given.’ Compare i. 6, 13; iv. 10.

‘Υπὲρ Χριστοῦ belongs to πάσχειν; but, a clause being interjected, in a way very characteristic of the apostle’s style, to bring out with force the specialty of the grace given to the Philippians, ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ is afterwards inserted for clearness.

30. Supposing this verse to be in close connection with the 29th, strict grammar requires the participle to be in the dative, in agreement with ἡμῖν. Some commentators clear the construction by regarding from ἦτις, of the 28th verse, to the end of the 29th, as a parenthesis. In this case ἔχοντες, like συναθλοῦντες and πτυρόμενοι, would agree with the subject of στήκετε in ver. 27. On this view, however, the sentence is stiff and artificial, and thus unlike the style of the apostle. It is better to suppose an irregularity.<sup>1</sup> Illustrations of this particular kind of irregularity—that of using a participle in the nominative, where strict construction would require an oblique case—are not uncommon in Paul’s writings; compare, for example, Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 16; and see Winer, § 63. I. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Through a curious oversight, Alford (in his second edition at least), whilst in his note on the passage arguing strongly against the parenthetical construction, has the parenthesis marked in his text.

## CHAPTER II.

VER. I. Παράκλησις and παραμύθιον are, as nearly as possible, synonymous,—both meaning sometimes ‘exhortation,’ sometimes ‘consolation.’ By some interpreters παράκλησις is regarded as used in the present passage in the former sense, and παραμύθιον in the latter. But the climax of the appeal, ‘if any bowels and mercies,’ and the form of the entreaty, ‘fulfil ye my joy,’ suggest, as it appears to me, that the thought of the whole verse is this,—‘If your own experience of spiritual comfort has, through your fellowship with the Spirit, produced in you a desire to give comfort.’ ‘Consolation’ and ‘comfort,’ therefore, I think, excellently represent the two words; and there is no tautology, for ‘in Christ’ and ‘of love’ give sufficiently distinct thoughts.

There is no need to limit the breadth of reference naturally found in ἀγάπης. To say, with some commentators, that it refers specially to the love of God the Father, so that in the first three clauses we have an allusion to each of the Persons of the Trinity, is far-fetched. To restrict the sense, with others, to ‘brotherly-kindness,’ appears, looking at the first and third clauses, to be equally unjustified.

In the last clause, all the uncial MSS. read τις instead of τινα. Green (*Gram.* p. 109), admitting also the form τις for τι before παραμύθιον, where it has but little MS. support, says that these readings ‘seem to point to a colloquial licence, according to which the combination εἰ τις was used as an indeclinable particle.’ A larger number of cases, it seems to me, would be needed to justify such a view. If τις be really the apostle’s word, it can hardly be otherwise accounted for than on the supposition that he meant to use some singular masculine or feminine substantive, but under some sudden impulse sub-

stituted σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί. The anomaly, however, is probably due to a blunder of some very early copyist.

2. The clause introduced by *īva* may be regarded as in apposition to χαρὰν,—the connection of thought being as if the apostle had said, ‘Fulfil ye my joy, and *this* is my joy, that ye,’ etc. ; comp. John xvii. 3. The construction is the more natural, too, because in the writer’s mind the idea of θέλω or παρακαλῶ was so vividly present, both of which, according to New Testament usage, may be construed with *īva*. The attempts of Meyer and Alford to make out that *īva* has here its telic meaning, are singularly forced. See note on chap. i. 9.

Σύμψυχοι may stand by itself, as in our version, or may be joined to the following words. The latter construction seems to give more compactness and force to the sentence. By most commentators τὸ ἐν is regarded as not differing in meaning from τὸ αὐτὸν preceding, except that the expression is ‘stronger’ (Lightfoot and Eadie), or ‘affords a more rigid notion’ (Green). If this be so, then σύμψυχοι alone—which in this case, as it appears to me, *must* be taken as an integral part of the clause—gives a clearly distinctive thought, preventing tautology. If τὸ ἐν be nearly equivalent to τὸ αὐτὸν, then the best explanation of the article before ἐν appears to be that of Green (*Gram.* p. 63), that it is employed, according to a familiar use, to bring out the *abstract* idea—the sense of τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες, therefore, being ‘minding unity.’ Still it may be questioned whether this is altogether natural. The article certainly in the first instance suggests that some particular ‘one thing,’ some definite reference, is in the apostle’s mind. Grotius, followed by Bishop Middleton (in an interesting note on the passage, in the second part of his *Doctrine of the Greek Article*), joins the clause with what follows,—thus, ‘minding the one thing, namely doing nothing according to factiousness,’ etc. But is there any straining in taking the reference to be to ‘the advancement of Christ’s cause in themselves and others’? Would not any Christian congregation, hearing, in such a connection as the

words have in the passage before us, the exhortation ‘Mind the one thing,’ immediately and most naturally give it such a meaning ?

3. To govern *μηδὲν, φρονοῦντες* is easily supplied from the words of the previous clause, or, if we prefer it, *ποιοῦντες* from the sentiment.

The article in *τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην* may perhaps mean ‘that which beseems you,’ or ‘which I know you possess,’ and may thus be rendered by ‘due,’ or by ‘your ;’ but it may be simply the mark of the abstract.

4. The *καὶ* after *ἀλλὰ* assumes that, though the prohibition in the previous clause of ‘looking upon our own things’ is, in form, absolute, yet, from the nature of the case, the reader has taken the ‘not’ with the force of ‘not only.’ As often in the New Testament, particularly with rules of conduct which are opposed to the *strongest* of the evil tendencies of depraved nature, the main precept is expressed in a very pointed and startling form, peculiarly fitted to secure its being remembered and thought over.

5. If *γὰρ* belongs, as seems probable, to the true text, we must suppose that the form in which the thought first presented itself to the apostle’s mind was, ‘Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, *for* it becomes us, as Christians, to have in us the same mind—the same spirit of self-sacrifice—as our Lord.’ This latter clause, however, is thrown into an imperative form,—with the introductory particle retained, although, strictly speaking, not suited to the imperative.

*Φρονείσθω*, the reading of the Received Text, has some uncial authority; but there is great preponderance in favour of *φρονεῖτε*. If we accept the latter, then there are two slight irregularities of construction in what follows. For *ἐν ὑμῖν*, connected with a verb in the second person, strict grammar would require *ἐν ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς*, or, according to New Testament usage, *ἐν εαυτοῖς*. Again, the regular form of the relative clause after *φρονεῖτε*

would obviously be ὁ καὶ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς (ἐφρόνει),—whereas with ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ we must supply ἐφρονεῖτο. It was probably to obviate these irregularities that some early copyist substituted φρονεῖσθω for φρονεῖτε.

6. The verb ὑπάρχω—in the participle at least, which is the form mainly used by Paul—appears to differ from εἰναι chiefly in that it calls particular attention to its predicate, as being specially important in itself, or in the argument; compare 1 Cor. xi. 7; Gal. i. 14, ii. 14.

Μορφὴ is certainly not, as was maintained by the Fathers, equivalent to οὐσία or φύσις; ‘yet the possession of the μορφὴ involves participation in the οὐσία also, for μορφὴ implies not the external accidents but the essential attributes’ (Lightfoot). The proof of this is given in detail by Lightfoot in a long, admirable, conclusive detached note. See also Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 2d series, § 20. In ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, therefore, we have the Lord’s true divinity implied, and, in the next verse, in μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, His true humanity.

If ἀρπαγμὸς here be taken, according to the ordinary sense of nouns in -μος, to mean ‘an act of plundering,’ then the meaning of the clause is exactly as in our version, and we have in it a continuation of the statement of our Lord’s pre-incarnate glory, to intensify the effect of the subsequent mention of His condescension. In this case, the sense of the participle ὑπάρχων, when fully exhibited, is ‘because He was.’ If we take ἀρπαγμὸς as equivalent to ἀρπαγμα, ‘something carried off, booty,’ then—the phrase ἀρπαγμα ἡγεῖσθαι, ποιεῖσθαι, or the like, occurring not unfrequently in the secondary sense of ‘to reckon something as a prize,’ ‘to set great store by’—the force of the clause is, ‘did not regard it as a prize to be on equality with God.’ In this case the clause begins the statement of the Saviour’s condescension; and ὑπάρχων means ‘though He was.’ The form ἀρπαγμὸς occurs very rarely. Only one instance has been observed in a classical writer (Plutarch), and there it

denotes the *act*; but ecclesiastical writers have it more than once, and their use of it is as equivalent to ἀρπαγμα. It would seem, therefore, that the context alone must decide what is the meaning borne by the word here; and, looking both at what precedes and what follows, the second view of the meaning seems the preferable. This passage is obviously introduced to illustrate self-sacrificing love. We naturally therefore expect the relative clause to have as its main statement mention of the great act of condescending grace; so that, had the apostle intended to express the thought given in our version, it would probably have been thrown into the form of a clause *subordinate* to the relative clause,—thus, ‘who,—although being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,—yet emptied Himself,’ etc. Again,—οὐχ before ἀρπαγμὸν, and ἀλλὰ at the beginning of the 7th verse, certainly seem to correspond, as ‘*not the one, but the other*.’ Now this is the connection brought out by the second view of the meaning, whilst the first view disregards it entirely, giving ἀλλὰ the force of ἀλλ’ ὅμως. Still further,—the emphatic position of ἀρπαγμὸν seems more natural on the second than on the first view. Finally,—the use of the adverbial construction τὸ εἶναι ἵστα Θεῷ, ‘to be on equality with God,’ instead of τὸ εἶναι ἵστον Θεῷ, ‘to be equal with God,’ seems to accord less with ‘thought it not robbery,’ than with ‘thought it not a prize;’ for the adverb points naturally to equality in glory of manifestation, thus being substantially equivalent to ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ,—a thought which suits the second view perfectly, whilst on the other we expect something of an advance from ‘form’ to ‘nature,’ such as the adjective ἵστον would exhibit. On the interpretation of οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἴγγιστο, Lightfoot has a long and excellent detached note. On the meaning of the whole passage, nothing probably can be found anywhere more satisfactory, for learning, exegetical acumen, and candour, than the discussion in Dr. Pye Smith’s *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, fifth edition, vol. ii. pp. 122–149.

7. Aorist participles connected with a main verb in the aorist are frequently coincident in time with the main verb. So in this verse and the next,—λαβὼν meaning, not ‘having taken,’ but ‘taking;’ and similarly with the others.

8. To the use of δὲ, as in θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ, with a repeated word to which something strengthening is added, there is a parallel in Rom. iii. 22. Its exact force is ‘but further.’ ‘Even,’ of the Authorized Version, represents it well.

9, 10. It is doubtful whether after ἔχαπίσατο αὐτῷ the reading should be ὄνομα alone, or τὸ ὄνομα. There is weighty ms. authority both for the insertion and for the omission of the article. Lachmann, Meyer, Lightfoot, insert; Tischendorf, Alford, Ellicott, omit. If the article be read, the meaning may be, ‘the name, or dignity, which you all know so well.’ If this dignity must be thought of as expressed by some particular designation, probably the name of ‘Lord’ is intended,—judging from the manner in which that name is spoken of in the 4th verse. Lightfoot thinks that ‘the divine name’ is meant, according to the frequent use in the Old Testament of such expressions as ‘to praise, bless, fear, the name of God.’ It seems clear at least that the personal name ‘Jesus,’ borne by the Lord during His humiliation, is not meant,—for the ὄνομα here spoken of was ‘given’ Him by God in His exaltation. Had the name ‘Jesus’ been meant, the words would have run, ‘God granted to Him that His name should be above every name,’ or the like. As it stands, the language will not bear this sense. Accordingly the words ἐν τῷ ὄνόματι Ἰησοῦ, in which, obviously, from the connection, the same ὄνομα is thought of as in the preceding clause, must mean, not ‘in the name Jesus,’ but ‘in the name’—that is, in recognition of the dignity and glory—‘of Jesus.’ The use by the apostle here of the name by which the Lord had been known in His lowliness has a rich significance, which is adverted to in the lecture on the passage. It is obvious from all this that the practice followed by some sections of the church, and founded, no

doubt, on the present passage, of bowing whenever the name ‘Jesus’ occurs in the public prayers, is not merely a superstitious deference to the letter of Scripture, but to a misunderstanding of the letter.

10. It may be doubted (see the lecture on the passage) whether *ἐπουρανίων*, *ἐπιγείων*, and *καταχθονίων* are masculine. Even admitting them to be masculine, it may be doubted whether, in what is so evidently simply a rhetorical expansion of the conception, ‘God’s moral creatures everywhere,’ it is necessary to define particularly the various classes. If we regard such definition as needful,—then, as it appears to me, the apostle’s reference is most naturally taken to be to angels and ‘the spirits of just men made perfect,’—to men living on the earth,—and to the devils, and the spirits of lost men. Meyer, Ellicott, and others, make the classes to be, respectively, angels,—living men,—and dead men. But that the apostle, a very few verses after he has told us of his full conviction that for him ‘to depart’ would be ‘to be *with Christ*, which is far better,’ should include departed *saints* in a class distinct from the *ἐπουράνιοι*,—and this, too, in a passage where we instinctively think, not of the body, but of the spirit,—seems to me in the very highest degree improbable. Meyer’s objection to the other view, that elsewhere in Paul’s writings (as in Eph. ii. 2, vi. 12) he speaks of the evil spirits being situated otherwise than as *καταχθόνιοι*, has little weight. In a passage of this kind they are naturally spoken of in connection with their true home,—the abyss (Luke viii. 31).

12. By some interpreters *ὑπηκούσατε* is thought to involve a reference to *ὑπήκοος* of ver. 8, and therefore to mean ‘obeyed *God*.’ The distance, however, makes the reference scarcely natural; and, looking at the clause which follows, ‘obeyed *me*’ seems rather to be the sense. But, of course, this means ‘me, as God’s ambassador.’ Compare 2 Cor. ii. 9.

The use of the subjective particle of negation, *μὴ*, seems to show clearly that the combination of words introduced by it

belongs to the imperative *κατεργάζεσθε*, not, as our translators have thought, to the indicative *ἰπηκούσατε*. Compare Winer, § 55. 1, *a*, remark on Eph. v. 15. The whole sentence gains much in point, too, by adopting this connection.

'Ως means obviously, '*as if you thought it right to obey in my presence only.*'

For Paul's use of *φόβος καὶ τρόμος* with some such force as 'self-distrust and strong solicitude,' compare 2 Cor. vii. 15; Eph. vi. 5. In the Septuagint use of the combination we find generally the full, strong, original sense of the words retained. See, for example, Gen. ix. 2; Ex. xv. 16; Deut. ii. 25.

15. As a rule, the active form *φαίνειν* is used in the sense of 'to shine,' whilst *φαίνεσθαι* means 'to appear.' Occasionally, however, *φαίνεσθαι* seems hardly to differ in meaning from *φαίνειν*; see, in the Septuagint, Isa. lx. 2, 2 Macc. xii. 9; and in the New Testament, Matt. xxiv. 27. The present appears to be another case of the kind. Though the image in *φωστῆρες* is probably that of the heavenly bodies, yet *φαίνεσθαι* can scarcely have here, as suggested by Meyer and Ellicott, its special use, to indicate their *appearance* or *rising*; because, whilst this would suit the *beginning* of a Christian life, it does not seem to accord with that continued exhibition of a holy example, of which the apostle is speaking. Applying the exact force of the middle voice, the meaning of the clause is, '*Ye show yourselves as light-givers.*' This thought is adequately exhibited by 'shine;' and therefore, with Alford, I am disposed to adhere to the rendering of the Authorized Version.

17. 'Αλλὰ appears to refer to an unexpressed thought arising most naturally out of *ἔδραμον* and *ἐκοπίαστα*, with which the preceding sentence closed: 'A running and a labouring I have called my ministerial work,—yet think not that I have any regret at having encountered the toil. Nay,—but if I be even offered as a libation, I rejoice.' Thus the *ἀλλὰ*, while retaining fully its adversative force, introduces a stronger statement than

the preceding ; compare James ii. 18. The ‘yea, and’ of our version renders it well.

Alford translates *εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι*, ‘if I am even being poured out,—‘because the danger was besetting him *now*, and waxing onward to its accomplishment.’ The present with *εἰ* may have this force ; but it may simply exhibit a vivid realization of the supposition before the mind ; compare Mark xi. 26 ; 1 Cor. vii. 9.

*Πίστεως* is governed by both *θυσίᾳ* and *λειτουργίᾳ*, standing related to the two, however, in somewhat different ways. With the former the genitive is one of apposition,—‘the sacrifice which consists in your faith ;’ with the latter, one of somewhat loose connection,—‘the priestly service relating to, or connected with, your faith.’ By some interpreters *θυσίᾳ* is taken here for the *act* of sacrificing ; but New Testament usage is in favour of giving it the sense of the *victim*. ‘Ἐπὶ seems to mean ‘in addition to.’ The statement of Josephus (*Antiq.* iii. 9. 4), that in drink-offerings the wine was poured *around* the altar, does not present any difficulty in the way of our translating it ‘upon,’ because, as Dr. Lightfoot notices, the Septuagint certainly uses *ἐπὶ* to describe these libations ; which would be ample authority for thus picturing the scene in a figurative reference like the present. But it does not seem possible to give any distinct idea to ‘upon’ in connection with the second governed substantive, ‘service.’

*Συγχαῖρω* sometimes means ‘congratulate,’ and such seems to be its sense here ; for after the statement ‘I rejoice with you all,—that is, ‘You and I rejoice together,—the counsel or injunction of the 18th verse would be superfluous. Now in ‘congratulation’ ‘reciprocation on the part of the person appealed to is not so much presupposed as invited’ (Lightfoot). In Luke i. 58 also the word may very well have this meaning.

18. *Tὸν αὐτὸν* is an accusative of reference,—‘with regard to the same thing,—that is here, practically, as our version

has it, ‘for the same cause.’ The phrase occurs also in Matt. xxvii. 44; where its force seems to be rather, ‘in the same way.’

19. Δὲ appears to connect ἀλπίζω with εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι,—the course of thought being of this kind, ‘But, whilst I have spoken of speedy removal by a bloody death, as a possibility which I must fully take into my calculations, still I hope to have intercourse with you yet a while,—through Timothy in the first instance, and afterwards (ver. 24) personally.’ To this connection Lightfoot objects that ‘the possibility of his own death, and the intention of sending Timotheus, do not stand in any sort of opposition.’ But the possibility of his death, speedily at least, and his ‘knowing their state’ through Timothy, so as to ‘be of good comfort,—stand in a certain opposition. And the thought of the 24th verse may naturally be supposed to be already fully before the apostle’s mind. Lightfoot himself connects ver. 19 with ver. 12: ‘I urged the duty of self-reliance during my absence,—yet I do not intend to leave you without guidance.’ To my mind, the distance is much too great to admit of this.

20. Ἰσόψυχον is by many commentators—as Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, Eadie—taken to mean ‘like-minded with *me*’ (the apostle). The opinion of Beza, Rilliet, Lightfoot, Hackett, and others, that the sense is ‘like-minded with *him*’ (Timothy), seems to me very much more probable. Seeing that the apostle undoubtedly regarded Timothy as like-minded with himself, he would certainly, I think, had he intended the former meaning, have said, not οὐδένα alone, but οὐδένα ἄλλον; just as Alford finds it needful to give in his note the rendering ‘none *else*,’ and De Wette, ‘keinen *andern*.’ Meyer says that, as no αὐτῷ is expressed, the ‘like-mindedness’ must be in relation to the subject of the governing verb ἔχω. But in the connection, I apprehend, the mind much more naturally supplies αὐτῷ than ἄλλον.

The compound relative ὅστις here represents its antecedent as

belonging to a *class* marked by certain qualities,—‘of that kind who,’ ‘such a one as.’ See Jelf’s *Greek Grammar*, § 816. 5.

In the revised translation of the Epistle given in this volume,  $\gamma\eta\sigma\iota\omega\varsigma$  has been rendered by ‘truly.’ This is inadequate; but the word in this connection is difficult to translate. Tyndale has ‘with so pure affection.’ Our translators, in their ‘naturally,’ seem to have intended to bring out the idea of  $\gamma\epsilon\nu$ -, the root of  $\gamma\eta\sigma\iota\omega\varsigma$ ,—‘with the love of one who is *kin* in Christ.’ ‘Genuinely,’ which, etymologically and otherwise, is the most exact English equivalent, they shunned,—probably as being in their day used only in poetry. Now also, though sufficiently common in prose, it might sound oddly in the connection. Conybeare gives ‘in earnest.’ Ellicott renders verb and adverb together, ‘will have a true care.’

22. In  $\delta\omega\kappa\mu\eta$ , as in the other words from the same root, the primary sense, ‘proof,’ leads easily into a secondary, ‘approval.’ Compare, in English, ‘a *proved* friend,’ ‘a *tried* friend.’ Here, therefore, the meaning may be, as in the Authorized Version, ‘the proof of him, that,’—that is, ‘the proof of what kind of man he is, afforded by the fact that;’ or ‘his proved character, his approved excellence, namely, that.’ Of this latter sense of  $\delta\omega\kappa\mu\eta$  there are, perhaps, instances in Rom. v. 4; 2 Cor. ii. 9, ix. 13.

Our translators have taken  $\pi\alpha\tau\pi\iota$  as governed by  $\sigma\bar{\imath}\nu$  understood, the  $\sigma\bar{\imath}\nu$  being expressed in the second member of the comparison,  $\sigma\bar{\imath}\nu \epsilon\mu\o\iota$ . But such a construction is found in poetry only; see Jelf, § 650. 2. It is probable, therefore, that there is a variation of construction in the two members,  $\pi\alpha\tau\pi\iota$  being governed by  $\delta\omega\lambda\epsilon\nu\epsilon\iota$  understood; see Winer, § 50. 7. As to the significance of this variation, see the lecture on the passage.

23.  $\epsilon\acute{E}x\alpha\tau\pi\iota\varsigma$  belongs closely to  $\omega\varsigma \dot{\alpha}\nu$ , κ.τ.λ., ‘immediately on my seeing.’ The form  $\dot{\alpha}\phi\iota\delta\omega$ , for  $\dot{\alpha}\pi\iota\delta\omega$  of the ordinary text, is supported by the most ancient MSS., and has been received by the chief recent editors. Lightfoot has a list of a number

of cases in which, in this and other compounds of *άθον*, the aspirate is found in the oldest authorities. There is here, no doubt, a relic of the digamma which the word had, and which has its representatives in the form the root takes in other languages,—in the *v* of the Latin *videre*, and the *w* of the German *wissen* and English *wit*.

25. As Epaphroditus was evidently the bearer of the letter, it is plain that in *ἱγησάμην*, and in *Ἐπεμψα* (ver. 28), we have cases of what is known as the *epistolary* aorist,—the writer placing himself in imagination at the point of time when his letter was *read*, and when consequently the thoughts and feelings of the time of writing would be past; Winer, § 40. 5, b, 2. The imperfect *ἦν*, in the subordinate clause (ver. 26), is, of course, to be explained on the same principle. In Latin, the imperfect and perfect are similarly used in letters, the purely *formal* nature of the preterite being shown by the fact that the adverb *nunc* may be joined with the verb, whilst a real preterite would require *tunc*; for example, *novi nihil nunc erat apud nos*,—literally, ‘there *was* at present no news with us;’ see Zumpt, § 503. Our idiom, in such cases, uses either the present or the perfect. For the ‘supposed’ and ‘sent’ of the Authorized Version, therefore, we must substitute either ‘suppose’ and ‘send,’ or ‘have supposed’ and ‘have sent.’

27. *Kai γὰρ* adds something strengthening, the *kai* having a force akin to its usual ‘even,—‘for indeed, or really, he was sick.’ See Jelf, § 786, obs. 8.

For the reading of the Received Text, and the more usual construction, *ἐπὶ λύπῃ*, the great majority of the uncial MSS. have *ἐπὶ λύπην*. With the accusative the idea of *motion* enters, the difference of meaning between the constructions being merely such as may be represented by ‘sorrow *upon* sorrow,’ and ‘sorrow *laid upon* sorrow.’

28. *Πάλιν* may be connected either with *ἰδόντες* or with *χαρῆτε*. The latter is probably that intended by the apostle, for he usually puts *πάλιν* before the verb it belongs to. With

this connection, moreover, the thought seems, perhaps, richer and more forcible.

30. It is doubtful whether *τοῦ Χριστοῦ* belongs to the true text. The MSS. have a considerable variety of readings,—*Χριστοῦ*, *τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, and *Κυρίου*; and one uncial, C, has no genitive at all. It is not improbable that this last manuscript exhibits the real state of the case, the various genitives being glosses by copyists to fill up what seemed to them the somewhat bald *διὰ τὸ ἔργον*. But a similar use of *τὸ ἔργον* alone, for ‘the work of Christ,’ occurs in Acts xv. 38. Compare also *τὸ ἐν* in ver. 2 above, with the note.

The MSS. are divided also between *παραβούλευσάμενος* and *παραβολεύσαμενος*, but with a great preponderance of authority in favour of the latter. The verb *παραβούλευσθαι* has the sense of the Latin *male consulere*, ‘to make poor provision for,’ ‘have little regard for,’—*παρὰ* here, as in many compounds, having the force of ‘amiss’—strictly, ‘going aside or beyond,’ missing the mark. The other verb *παραβολεύσθαι* does not occur elsewhere, but is a form which—in the same way as *πέρπερεύσθαι* (I Cor. xiii. 4), from *πέρπερος*, and others—may be derived from the adjective *παράβολος*, ‘gambling, reckless.’ *Παραβολεύσθαι*, then, will mean ‘to play the gambler,’—*τῇ ψυχῇ*, ‘with his life.’ ‘Hazard’ excellently represents the thought, the original meaning of this word (which is probably derived from the Latin *tessera*, ‘a die,’ through the Italian *azzardo*, a corruption of *a-tsar*, for *tessar*, -do) being ‘a game of chance.’ Obviously, as used by the apostle, *παραβολεύσθαι* has nothing of blame in it, but simply sets forth, with much liveliness, the utter lack of care for himself which Epaphroditus had shown in his zeal to serve Christ by ministering to His servant.

## CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. We naturally refer  $\tau\alpha\ \alpha\nu\tau\alpha$  to the precept just given,  $\chiai\rho\epsilon\tau\epsilon\ \dot{\epsilon}\nu\ Kupi\omega$ . It is true that this precept has not occurred in the Epistle before in the same words, or in as general a form; but, besides the injunction of chap. ii. 18, there have been several references to spiritual joy, of a kind to impress every thoughtful reader with the conviction that to the apostle the cultivation of such a spirit seemed of the very highest moment,—references, therefore, equivalent to precepts. See chap. i. 4, 18, 25, 26; ii. 2, 17, 28. Some commentators have imagined that there is an allusion to a repeated occurrence of this precept (or of that of the second verse, with which, though not so naturally, the clause may be connected) in some previous and now lost letter from the apostle to the Philippians,<sup>1</sup> or in his oral teaching when with them. But there seems to be no reason whatever for our going out of the Epistle itself to find a sufficient explanation of the reference. Lightfoot objects to making  $\tau\alpha\ \alpha\nu\tau\alpha$  point back to  $\chiai\rho\epsilon\tau\epsilon\ \dot{\epsilon}\nu\ Kupi\omega$ , on the grounds that ‘such an injunction has no very direct bearing on the safety of the Philippians,’ and that ‘its repetition could hardly be suspected of being *irksome*’ (grievous) ‘to the apostle.’ To the former of these objections the apostle himself seems to furnish a sufficient reply in chap. iv. 7, where he says, ‘The peace of God’—an expression which is very nearly equivalent to ‘joy in the Lord’—‘shall *keep* ( $\phi\rho\nu\rho\rho\jmath\sigma\epsilon$ , “garrison”) your hearts and minds.’ Neither does the second objection appear valid, because the apostle’s word  $\delta\kappa\nu\rho\bar{o}\nu$  does not

<sup>1</sup> The idea that the apostle wrote more than one letter to this church is supposed to find support in the Epistle of Polycarp, § 3; but see note on the passage.

necessarily imply that the subject in his mind was in itself a *disagreeable* one. Looking merely at his originative power and at his impetuosity of spirit, and not at his tender fatherly care for the training of his spiritual children, one might naturally think that the iteration and reiteration of *any* principle or precept would be ‘irksome’ to him. Lightfoot supposes that τὰ αὐτὰ points forward to something which the apostle was about to say, but has not said,—his thoughts, when he had reached this point in the letter, being through some circumstance diverted into a new channel. He thinks the subject on which Paul intended to speak was probably the dissension among certain members of the Philippian church, already alluded to in chap. ii. 1-4. That there was at the close of the 1st verse of the 3rd chapter a sudden diversion of thought, I think highly probable (see the lecture on the passage); but the ordinary view of the reference of τὰ αὐτὰ seems to me decidedly more likely than this.

2. The sense of ‘Beware’ is given here to βλέπειν with the accusative, by the context merely. Compare, for example, Col. iv. 17. Βλέπειν ἀπὸ means ‘to beware of,’ ‘to give heed to, in such a way as to separate ourselves from;’ see Mark viii. 15, xii. 38.

4. The construction is easily explained. Καίπερ is regularly construed with a participle. Had the reference of the statement in the first clause of this verse been as wide as that of the 3rd verse—namely to all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles,—the apostle would have written καίπερ ἔχοντες; but seeing that the statement made here was true of himself, but not of the Philippian Christians, he takes *himself* out of the whole subject ιημεῖς, retaining the participial construction, καίπερ ἔγώ ἔχων.

The primary sense of the words ἔχων πεποίθησιν ἐν σαρκὶ,—‘having confidence in the flesh,—is clearly not the meaning here; because such a statement would be directly contradictory of that made in the immediately preceding clause. We may,

with Van Hengel, take the time of the participle to be past,—or, more exactly, hold the participle to be used almost as a substantive or an adjective, the time being given by the context—‘though I (was once) a truster in the flesh.’ Compare διώκων in ver. 6, which apparently must be explained somewhat in this way; see also the use of ὡς in John ix. 25. Or, with Beza and others, we may regard πεποίθησιν as denoting ‘a ground of confidence, a right to trust,—the apostle in this case, as often, placing himself on the ground occupied by his adversaries: ‘Supposing—what is not true—that, under any circumstances, a man might place confidence in the flesh, then I have ground for doing so.’ In Ps. lxx. 7, Symmachus has πεποίθησις in this sense, representing the Hebrew מִתְּסָבֵב. Compare the use of ἐλπίς and χαρὰ in 1 Thess. ii. 19. Indeed, the use of such nouns as ‘trust,’ ‘hope,’ ‘joy,’ for the ground of the feeling, is so natural, that probably in all languages it is found to some extent. This, I apprehend, is the true explanation. Most recent commentators put it aside, and content themselves with saying that in ἔχων the apostle is to be regarded as declaring that he ‘has,’ ‘possesses,’ but does not ‘use’ the confidence. But I think Beza’s sense of πεποίθησιν is here really assumed; for, whilst ‘to have, but not use, a *ground of confidence*’ has a distinct meaning, I cannot see that ‘to have, but not use, a *feeling of confidence*,’ has any.

Having used ἔχων πεποίθησιν in this sense, the apostle not unnaturally, in the 2nd clause of the verse, gives πεποίθεται the same or a similar sense, ‘to trust (with good ground).’ Even apart from the evidence afforded by the general line of argument, the use of δοκεῖ shows that some such meaning must be given to πεποίθεται. ‘If any other man *regards himself* as having the *feeling of confidence*,’ would not be a natural mode of expression; while ‘if any other man *regards himself* as having a *ground of confidence*,’ or, ‘as trusting *with good ground*,’ is a clear and natural thought. Ellicott renders, ‘if any other man deemeth that he can put confidence in the

flesh ;' Conybeare, 'if any other man thinks that he has ground of confidence in the flesh ;' Alford (in his *Authorized Version Revised*), 'if any other man thinketh to trust in the flesh.'

6. On the use of the present participle διώκων, see in notes on ver. 4.

7. We may take *μοι* in the sense which first presents itself,—namely as a dative of advantage ; for the facts which the apostle has enumerated were really, in his early days, great advantages to him, as regards his prospects of worldly advancement among his countrymen. Or, if we take 'gains' as meaning 'advantages with respect to standing before God,' then *μοι* will mean 'in my judgment.' According to the train of thought, the latter appears the more probable sense.

8. It is evident from the emphatic position of ἥγοῦμαι, and the unemphatic position of πάντα, that the antithesis set forth by the adversative and strengthening combination ἀλλὰ μὲν οὖν is not between ταῦτα and πάντα, but between ἤγημαι and ἥγοῦμαι. Ἔγημαι has its full force as a perfect,—describing a past fact having some direct relation to the present time. 'But think not that the *present* feeling exhibited in this ἤγημαι is, as it were, a mere dull impression resulting from the judgment formed on the subject long ago. Nay, but (ἀλλὰ), in truth (μὲν), looking over the whole case (οὖν), I also *now* deliberately reckon them all to be loss.'

10. For the use of the infinitive with the genitive of the article before it, to express design, see Winer, § 44. 4, b; Green, p. 178; Jelf, § 492. 2, and § 678. 3, b. This genitive, explained by the older scholars as governed by ἐνεκα or χάριν understood, is in truth a simple genitive of cause,—a use according perfectly with the force of this case. By some commentators τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτὸν is regarded as co-ordinate with ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, and therefore in immediate dependence on τὰ πάντα ἔξημιώθην, καὶ ἥγοῦμαι σκύβαλα εἴναι ; but this view of the construction does not accord with the inartificial character of the apostle's style. It is much more natural to take the 10th

verse as subordinate to the clause with *ἴνα*, exhibiting a *further* object. Though Χριστὸν κερδήσω points to all the blessings enjoyed in Christ by the believer, yet the expansion of the thought given in the 9th verse shows that *justification* was mainly in the apostle's mind at this point. Now every Christian—to some extent from the moment of conversion, and ever the more as he ripens in spiritual wisdom—while rejoicing with profoundest thankfulness in pardon and acceptance, as in themselves unspeakably precious, longs to have, through the state of acceptance and the divine guidance thus granted to him, more abundant experimental knowledge of Christ.

The participle συμμορφιζόμενος stands in connection with the unexpressed subject of γνῶναι; and its being in the nominative accords with the usual tendency of the Greek language in cases where the (unexpressed) subject of an infinitive is the same as the subject of the governing verb. For another construction in a clause with *τοῦ* and the infinitive, see Rom. vii. 3. From the course of thought, it is evident that the participial clause stands in special connection with what *immediately* precedes it, τοῦ γνῶναι τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ; and that συμμορφιζόμενος is very nearly equivalent to διὰ τοῦ συμμορφίζεσθαι.

II. For the force of *εἰ πώς* here, see the lecture on the passage. Καταντήσω may be either the future indicative,—with which *εἰ πώς* is construed in Rom. i. 10,—or the first aorist subjunctive. Though the subjunctive with *εἰ* is rare in prose (see Jelf, § 854. 1, obs. 1; and Winer, § 41. b, 2, c); yet the fact that an indisputable case occurs in the very next verse, *εἰ καταλάβω*, makes it likely that we should regard the form here also as subjunctive. Of sentences with *εἰ* employed as it is in these verses, the ultimate explanation probably is, that the apodosis (some consequence, happy, useful, injurious, etc., as the case may be) is suggested and loosely represented by the verb of the main clause, as here by *γνῶναι* and *διώκω* respectively.

But, practically, hypothesis has passed entirely into the background in such cases, the subjunctive being employed ‘as an expression of *design*, to which a tone of diffidence is imparted by its being cast in a hypothetical form’ (Green).

The compound ἐξανάστασις, which occurs here only in the New Testament, is by some regarded as having a special force,—denoting distinctively a resurrection of the righteous prior to that of the wicked. Thus Mr. Birks, in his *Outlines of Unfulfilled Prophecy*, says that it ‘might be rendered “the peculiar resurrection.”’ This seems to strain the word. Ellicott observes that this double compound ‘does not appear to have any special force, but seems only an instance of the tendency of later Greek to adopt such forms without any increase of meaning.’

Somewhat similarly, ἀνάστασις (or here, ἐξανάστασις) ἐκ νεκρῶν, as distinguished from ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν, is supposed to refer specifically to the resurrection of Christ or of His people. Such certainly is the reference of the form of expression with ἐκ, wherever it occurs in the New Testament. The other form also, however, which is considerably more frequent, has the same reference in a large proportion of instances. An interesting discussion on these points is to be found in Dr. David Brown’s work on *Christ’s Second Coming*, sixth edition, pp. 182–187.

12. The aorist and perfect have their full distinctive force,—Ἐλαβον pointing back to the time of conversion, τετελείωμαι referring to the apostle’s subsequent life up to the time of writing. As object to Ἐλαβον we may either, from what precedes, supply ‘the full experimental knowledge of Christ,’ or, from what follows, ‘the prize’ or ‘the goal.’ The latter seems to me the more probable. In the translation, I have used for Ἐλαβον and καταλάβω expressions kindred to each other, to suggest the connection. Whether this be judged necessary or not, however, it seems clear that ‘attained,’ of the Authorized Version, is an unhappy rendering, as suggesting

a connection with 'attain' of the previous verse, where *καταντήσω* is the Greek word.

'Ἐφ' ὁ may be explained in two ways. It may mean 'because,' the construction of the relative being one of attraction for ἐπὶ τούτῳ ὅτι, 'on the ground of this, that,' *propterea quod*; see Rom. v. 12; 2 Cor. v. 4. Or, as our translators have taken it, it may mean 'for which,' referring to an omitted *τοῦτο*, the object of *καταλάβω*: with regard to the omission, comp. Luke v. 25; and with regard to this force of ἐπὶ, Eph. ii. 10; Gal. v. 13; and, in this very phrase ἐφ' ὁ, Phil. iv. 10. The latter seems the probable sense here, the argument as brought out by it appearing somewhat more compact and forcibly expressed than on the other view of the meaning.

The *καὶ* before *καταλάβω* is taken by Meyer to contrast that verb with the preceding *ἔλαβον*, 'if that not λάβω merely, but also (or even) *καταλάβω*;' by Alford and Ellicott, to contrast it with *διώκω*. I am inclined to think that the view indicated by De Wette is perhaps more probable than either,—that the apostle, having already the great thought, *κατελήφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ*, vividly before his mind, instinctively attached the *καὶ* to *καταλάβω*, in contrast with that as yet unexpressed thought.

*Katà* in *καταλαμβάνειν* seems to have, as often in composition, a strengthening power, giving the idea of strenuousness, suddenness, or the like. This is prominent in a considerable number of the instances in which the verb occurs in the New Testament. Paul's general use of it is, as here, with reference to such exertion as was shown by the racers in the great games; comp. Rom. ix. 30; 1 Cor. ix. 24.

13. Regarding *ἐν δὲ*, and the image in *ἐπεκτεινόμενος*, see the lecture on the passage.

14. *Ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* may be joined either with *διώκω* or with *κλήσεως*. No difficulty in the way of this latter construction arises from the absence of a connecting *τῆς*; because to substantives like *κλῆσις*, in which the notion of the verb they are derived from presents itself very prominently, adverbial

combinations of words are often attached immediately, just as to the verb itself. Compare the connection of ἀπὸ πρώτης ἡμέρας with καινωνίᾳ, in chap. i. 5, and the note.

16. The fact that the most ancient MSS., A B &c, omit κανόνι, τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν, and that in the others there are variations in words or order, renders it in the highest degree probable that these words do not belong to the true text, but are a copyist's gloss, derived from chap. ii. 2 and Gal. vi. 16. The meaning of the words which remain is, 'Nevertheless' (or better perhaps, 'Only'), 'whereto we have (now, and at any time) attained, by the same let us walk.' With knowledge of duty, practice is always to correspond.

On φθάνειν, Ellicott remarks,—'The primary and classical meaning of this verb (*prævenire*) appears to have been almost entirely lost sight of in Alexandrian Greek, and to have merged in the general meaning "venire," and, with εἰς, "pervenire."'

Στοιχεῖν has the force of στοιχῶμεν, 'let us walk.' This use of the infinitive with a hortatory or imperative force is not very uncommon in classical writers, but is somewhat rare in the New Testament. Compare Rom. xii. 15. It 'can be used of all three persons, as a general expression of necessity or of something to be done' (Jelf, § 671. c). For the exhibition of general principles of duty, the absence of a distinct exhibition of the idea of person renders the infinitive specially suitable; and in the present passage 'it points out with peculiar effect the unchanging rule for directing the Christian life' (Winer, § 43. 5, d). To govern such an infinitive, the mind instinctively supplies χρὴ or δεῖ. Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, and others, translate στοιχεῖν here, 'walk ye;' but, with the first person ἐφθάσαμεν in the relative clause, this seems exceedingly unnatural,—and the instances of the use of the infinitive for the *first person*, cited by Jelf, in the paragraph above referred to, from Herodotus and Sophocles, quite justify our taking it with the same force here. So De Wette and Lightfoot.

17. To the verb σκοπεῖν, 'to look at, mark,' the idea, 'for

imitation,' is given here simply by the connection. In Rom. xvi. 17, the apostle, using this same verb, says, 'Mark, and avoid.' Compare note on the use of *βλέπειν* in the 2nd verse of this chapter.

18. With *περιπατοῦσι* we expect an adverb or adverbial clause,—'wickedly,' 'in a way to prove themselves enemies of the cross of Christ,' or the like. In his earnestness, however, the apostle hastens on into the relative clause, and takes into it the thought which, according to exactness of composition, would have been expressed in immediate connection with *περιπατοῦσι*. Storr and others give *περιπατοῦσι* the sense of 'go about, itinerate,'—as in 1 Pet. v. 8; but this is altogether unnatural. The word must unquestionably have the same meaning here as in the previous verse.

19. The last clause receives a peculiar prominence through its isolation in construction. With regard to the significance of this, see the lecture on the passage. As to the frequent occurrence of the nominative in participial clauses, where properly one of the oblique cases would be required, compare note on chap. i. 30. Strictly speaking, however, as Ellicott observes, the use of the nominative in the present passage can hardly be called an anacoluth, but is rather 'an emphatic return to the primary construction:' 'many walk—the minders of earthly things.'

20. The precise meaning of *πολιτεύμα* here is not altogether clear. In the sense given by our translators, 'conversation,' or 'mode of conduct,' the noun does not seem to occur, though the verb *πολιτεύσθαι* is used in the sense of 'to conduct one's self'; see chap. i. 27. The thought, moreover, according to this rendering, 'Our conversation is in heaven,' is peculiar, and difficult to grasp with definiteness; for this is a considerably different statement from that in Col. iii. 3, 'Your life (*ζωὴ*) is hid with Christ in God,'—the reference there being to the spring or principle of the believer's life, while 'conversation' denotes daily conduct in its details. The statement

that this, the Christian's daily life,—not, 'is regulated, according to the measure of his faith, by principles taught him from heaven,' or 'by the spirit becoming one who hopes for heaven,' but—'is in heaven' (and this with the strong word ὑπάρχει), is certainly remarkable, and does not seem to have anything very closely resembling it elsewhere in Scripture. Πολίτευμα is found not unfrequently in the sense of 'state, commonwealth, country,' to which men belong as πολῖται; and this is the meaning attached to it here by Meyer, Ellicott, and others. The sense of 'citizenship,' adopted by Wiesinger, Braune, and others, appears to me preferable,—the express exhibition of the *relation* of believers to the heavenly Jerusalem seeming to accord more perfectly with the natural course of thought than the simple objective exhibition of the city or country itself. It is true that no instance has been adduced of the use of the word in this sense,—but it is certainly a sense most naturally suggested by the form; and the use, in Latin, of *civitas* for 'a state,' or for 'citizenship in a state,' and, in Greek, similarly, of πολιτεία, shows how easily one word could represent both ideas. Πολιτεία occurs only twice in the New Testament,—in Eph. ii. 12, and in Acts xxii. 28; and in the one place it bears the one meaning, 'commonwealth,' in the other, the other, 'citizenship.' Then the idea of 'citizenship in heaven' was one familiar to religious thinkers of various schools; and both Philo and the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* use the verb πολιτεύεσθαι in this connection. It seems to me, therefore, to be the sense which attaches itself most readily and naturally to the substantive here.

On ὑπάρχειν, see note on chap. ii. 6. No one who has at all looked into the use of this verb will entertain any doubt that it was always intended to bear some shade of meaning additional to that of the simple substantive verb εἰναι, though it is difficult occasionally to determine with precision what that shade is. In this verse the thought may be, 'is even now, is already,' or 'is, let me remind you.' On this latter use of

*ὑπάρχειν*, to exhibit something as new, or, at least, as probably not obvious to readers at the moment, or not recognised by them in its full significance, see Alford's note on Acts xvi. 20.

If *πολίτευμα* be taken to mean 'state, country,' then the relative *οὐ* may agree with it as its antecedent. But, on the other hand, whatever be the sense of *πολίτευμα*, *εἰς οὐ* may be looked on as simply an adverbial phrase, meaning 'whence,'—with the relative not in strict construction at all. See Winer, § 21. 3.

The position of *σωτῆρα* shows that the emphasis is on it, the contrast being very vivid in the writer's mind between the position of those who cherish such an expectation and that of those previously mentioned, *ὅν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια*. Tyndale brings out the meaning well by his 'from whence we look for a Saviour, even the Lord Jesus Christ.'

21. *Σχῆμα* and *μορφὴ* are, respectively, 'fashion' and 'form,'—the one comparatively transient, depending on casual circumstances; the other, the expression or manifestation of the real nature, and thus, it may be, enduring. The distinction is found also in the compounds. In Rom. xii. 2,—where our Authorized Version, by using in both clauses a compound of 'form,' 'conformed,' and 'transformed,' hides the distinction entirely,—'being in agreement with the fleeting *fashion* of this world' (*συσχηματίζεσθαι*) is contrasted with 'exhibiting a *change of life* adequately representing a *change in the depths of the nature*' (*μεταμορφοῦσθαι*). In the verse before us the distinction is not so obvious. The meaning, however, seems to be, as Dr Lightfoot gives it, 'will *change the fashion* (*μετασχηματίσει*) of the body of our humiliation, and *fix it in the form* (*σύμμορφον*) of the body of His glory.' Lightfoot, in a long detached note, discusses this distinction with characteristic thoroughness. Trench's remarks also in his *Synonyms*, 2nd series, § 20, well repay perusal.

*Μετασχηματίσει*—*σύμμορφον* means 'will change, so that it shall be conformed,' the connection being accurately given by

the words *eis τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτῷ*, which are found in the Textus Receptus before *σύμμορφον*, but are unquestionably a gloss. For similar constructions, see Rom. viii. 29; Jas. ii. 5; and compare Winer, § 66. 3.

*Kατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν* is, ‘according to the exercise of His power.’ On the force given by the introduction of *ἐνέργειαν*, see the last paragraph of the lecture on the passage. The form of expression with the infinitive does not differ in meaning from *δύναμις* otherwise than as setting forth, ‘perhaps a little more forcibly, the enduring nature and latitude of that power’ (Ellicott).

For *ἑαυτῷ*, of the Received Text, the recent critical editions, following the most ancient MSS., read *αὐτῷ*,—as in many similar cases in the New Testament, where the reference is to the subject of the main verb. In classical Greek *ἑαυτῷ* would have been necessary, just as ‘*Himself*’ is in English; but in the later Greek the forms of the simple *αὐτὸς* were very commonly employed instead of those strictly reflective.

## CHAPTER IV.

VER. 2. The first name in this verse, looking simply at the form, might designate a *man*, as has been supposed by our translators. The name Euodianus occurs occasionally,—of which Euodias might be a shortening. Tyndale took the other also to be a man's name, giving it as 'Sintiches,'—a form for which there seems to be no authority. But when we look at the verse in its connection with the next, it becomes clear that both names designate *women*; because for *aὐταῖς* of the 3rd verse there is no possible reference except the two persons here named. The true forms, then, are 'Euodia' and 'Syntyche,'—both of which occur in inscriptions.

3. Failing, as has been observed in the previous note, to see the reference of *aὐταῖς* to the women mentioned in the 2nd verse, our translators have given the pronoun the force of a demonstrative, and thus made the apostle speak generally of the women who had been helpful to him in his Christian work at Philippi; whilst the real meaning is, 'Help them (Euodia and Syntyche), seeing that they laboured.' With regard to this force of the compound relative *ὅστις*, as equivalent to the Latin *quippe qui*, or *utpote qui*, compare chap. i. 28, with note.

Lightfoot would join *μετὰ καὶ Κλήμεντος*, κ.τ.λ., with *συλλαμβάνον*, rather than with *συνήθλησαν*,—supposing that the apostle's object is 'to engage *all* in the work of conciliation.' But this does not appear natural. In particular, the clause *ἄν τὰ ὄνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς* would lack relevancy and point with this connection.

4. 'Ἐρω (from a present *εἴρω*, used by Homer) is always a *future* in the New Testament, as in classical writers: '*will say*,' therefore,—not '*say*,' as in the Authorized Version.

5. As to the exact meaning of ἐπιεύκεια, or τὸ ἐπιεύκειον, see Trench's *Synonyms*, 1st series, § 43.

6. As to the distinction of meaning between προσευχὴ and δέησις, see Trench's *Synonyms*, 2nd series, § 1.

7. Meyer and Lightfoot take ἡ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα νοῦν to mean 'which surpasseth every counsel, or device' (of man), as a defence for the soul. This thought is in itself true and pertinent; but a comparison of Eph. iii. 20 naturally leads one to think it more probable that the ordinary view of the meaning was that intended by the apostle.

The feelings having, with regard to all subjects of thought, and especially in the sphere of morals, very great influence on the judgment, Scripture language does not draw the sharp line which we often do between the action of 'head' and 'heart.' The καρδία, therefore, may be looked on as the fountain of νοήματα; compare 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15. But in the vast majority of instances where καρδία occurs, the prominent thought intended is evidently 'the seat of *feeling*;' whilst etymologically, and in ordinary use, νόημα is 'an act of the *reason*.' In the place before us, as it seems to me, one naturally attaches these meanings to the words, because the use of νοῦν with each separately appears to require a wider distinction in the sense than is brought out by 'the καρδία and its issues.' Our version therefore seems to give the apostle's meaning with substantial accuracy by 'hearts and minds,'—though, for the latter, 'thoughts' would be more exact. Meyer says that 'the reference distinctively of καρδία to feelings and will, and of νοήματα to intellectual action, is arbitrary.' But in truth, while permitted by the usage of the words, it appears to be naturally suggested by the connection and way in which they are here employed.

8. For the use of εἰ τις as practically equivalent to 'whatever,' compare Rom. xiii. 9 and Eph. iv. 29.

Λογίζεσθαι means 'to think about' (in a serious way); and thus when, as here, moral duties are the subject, a definite aim

to bring results of thought into practice is naturally implied; compare 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Πράσσετε of ver. 9, therefore, simply takes up what λογίζεσθε has already suggested, and sends it home with energy.

9. The relative clause ἀ καὶ ἐμάθετε, κ.τ.λ., may be construed, as by our translators, with the ταῦτα which stands before πράσσετε. Thus the whole verse is a separate sentence, co-ordinate with the 8th. But, according to the flow of the language, ἀ seems to connect itself more naturally with the ταῦτα preceding,—that before λογίζεσθε. In this case the sentence of the 8th verse is continued to ἐν ἐμοὶ, where a colon or a full stop is put. This is the connection adopted by the earlier English versions. With this construction, the first καὶ of the 9th verse appears to mean ‘also,’ rather than ‘both.’ Ellicott translates ἀ καὶ by ‘which also;’ and yet puts a colon before the ἀ, and a comma after ἐμοὶ,—evidently making the ταῦτα of the 9th verse the antecedent to ἀ. To me this appears confused and unsatisfactory.

Παραλαμβάνειν is sometimes used as almost an exact synonym for μανθάνειν; see Gal. i. 12; 1 Thess. ii. 13. But here it evidently means ‘to accept,’ as in John i. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 1.

‘Ηκούσατε is by Ellicott, Lightfoot, Alford, and others, taken to mean ‘heard of.’ It seems to me more natural to regard the apostle as referring in ηκούσατε and εἴδετε respectively to the exemplification which had been given to them of Christian character in his *speech* and *conduct*, when he was among them: ‘which things—ye heard and saw in me.’ So Meyer. Out of ἐν ἐμοὶ, which belong immediately to the last two verbs (and with regard to this use of which compare chap. i. 30), the mind readily supplies παρ’ ἐμοῦ for ἐμάθετε and παρελάβετε.

10. Ἀναθάλλειν is used both intransitively, ‘to bloom again,’ and transitively, ‘to cause to bloom again.’ De Wette, Lightfoot, and others, regard it as used here transitively,—‘ye revived your interest in me.’ A serious objection to this construction is, that it seems to make the blooming of kind attention to the

apostle dependent on the *will* of the Philippians; whereas the whole passage shows that circumstances alone had prevented the practical expression of what had all along been in their hearts. Supposing the verb to be intransitive, two modes of construing the following words are possible. Τὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν may be taken together as an accusative of reference, ‘as to your care for me;’ or φρονεῖν may be joined immediately to ἀνθεθάλετε, as governed by it in a somewhat loose way, and τὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ be taken as the object of φρονεῖν,—‘ye bloomed again to care for my interest.’ The latter of these constructions, adopted by Bengel, Meyer, Alford, and Eadie, seems ‘artificial, and contrary to the current and sequence of the Greek’ (Ellicott). The only argument in its favour is that, according to it, ἐφ’ ὃ of the following clause refers with logical propriety to τὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ; whereas, according to the other construction, it refers formally to the whole, τὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν, and thus we have in the relative clause this statement, ἐπὶ τῷ φρονεῖν ἐφρονεῖτε. Yet, in truth, the mind instinctively takes out of the whole clause ‘my interest’ as the antecedent to ‘which;’—and a slight irregularity of construction appears very much more accordant with Paul’s style than the somewhat stiff construction proposed.

With regard to ἐφ’ ὃ, ‘for which,’ compare note on chap. iii. 12. Had the connection been with ἐφρονεῖτε alone, a simple accusative of the object, δοῦ, might have been expected; but ἐφ’ ὃ suits also ἡκαιρεῖσθε. Some commentators, as Calvin and Rilliet, to avoid the awkwardness of construction discussed in the previous note, make ὃ masculine, referring to ἐμοῦ. But, as Meyer points out, ὃ, in this phrase ἐφ’ ὃ, is elsewhere used by Paul only as neuter; and, besides, it is difficult to see why the apostle, had ἐμοῦ been the antecedent in his mind, should have used ἐπὶ instead of simply repeating the ὑπὲρ of the former clause.

*Kαὶ*, ‘also,’ before ἐφρονεῖτε, has relation to the *tense* of the verb. The apostle had expressed his joy that their care of

him had ‘now at last flourished again.’ No sooner has he written or dictated the words, than it occurs to him that his statement might easily be misconstrued into one of reproach for their conduct in the past; and accordingly he adds,—‘a matter for which ye *were* careful also’ before this, ‘but lacked opportunity’ of practically showing your affection.

11. *Kaθ' ὑστέρησιν* means ‘in consequence of want.’ For this force of *κατὰ*, compare Matt. xix. 3; Acts iii. 17; and see Winer, § 49. *d*, b. *b*.

For an admirable statement of the meaning of *αὐτάρκης*, see Barrow, Sermon xxxvii., near the beginning.

12. The second word of this verse is, according to the true reading, *καὶ*, instead of *δὲ* of the common text. This *καὶ* is by Meyer, Ellicott, Eadie, and others, taken to mean ‘also,—as serving ‘to annex the special instance to the more general statement’ (Ellicott). But passages such as Eph. v. 18, to which Ellicott refers, where *καὶ* is used in the sense of ‘and (in particular),’ do not supply a real analogy to its use here. I cannot think that ‘also’ could ever be employed to annex a particular case to the mention of a general principle. Lightfoot’s opinion appears very much more probable,—that the apostle originally intended to write simply *καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι καὶ περισσεύειν*, ‘both to be abased and to abound,’ but, after having shaped the first part suitably to this, then interrupted the connection by the repetition of *οὖθα* for the sake of emphasis. In the revised version of the Epistle given in this volume, the irregularity is imitated.

‘*Ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι* seems to be a colloquial mode of expression, setting forth *universality* with liveliness, like our English ‘in each and all things,’ or, ‘in all and everything.’ To suppose, with our translators, Beza, and others, an ellipsis after *παντὶ* of *τόπῳ*, or, with Chrysostom and Grotius, of *χρόνῳ*; or, with Luther and Bengel, to take *ἐν πᾶσι* as meaning ‘among all *men*,’—is altogether arbitrary. Most of the commentators who take *ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι* to mean ‘in all and everything,’

construe these words with *μεμύημαι*,—regarding the infinitives which follow as a statement in detail of what is meant by ‘all and everything :’ ‘in all and everything I have been initiated, namely,’ etc. Meyer, followed by Alford, objects to this connection, on the ground that the verb *μνᾶν* is nowhere found construed with *ἐν*. He therefore, putting no comma after *μεμύημαι*, joins *ἐν παντὶ, κ.τ.λ.*, with the infinitives, giving the words the sense of ‘in all circumstances.’ The objection to the ordinary connection appears ‘somewhat hypercritical’ (Ellicott),—the construction of *μεμύημαι* with *ἐν*, though not actually found elsewhere, being in itself simple and natural enough.

13. *Πάντα* is an accusative of reference,—‘I have availing power with regard to all things.’ Probably, however, the more accurate explanation of the construction of such a verb as *ἰσχέων* with an accusative, is that from its meaning it very easily receives a distinct transitive notion; thus here, ‘I can (do) all things.’ Comp. Gal. v. 6; James v. 16.

15. *Εἰς λόγον* is occasionally used in the sense of ‘with regard to.’ Some interpreters take this to be its meaning here. The use of *λόγος* in ver. 17, however, for ‘an account, reckoning,’ seems to make it probable that here also, connected as it is with *δόσεως καὶ λήψεως*, we should give it this sense,—the *εἰς*, by itself, meaning, as often, ‘with regard to.’ The reference of *δόσεως καὶ λήψεως* has been variously explained. The most natural and satisfactory view seems to me to be, that the same thought was in the apostle’s mind which he expresses in 1 Cor. ix. 11 (comp. also Rom. xv. 27),—the thought, namely, that having received of him ‘spiritual things,’ the Philippians acted reasonably and honourably in giving to him in return of their ‘carnal things.’ So Chrysostom, followed by many other expositors, including, of the more recent, Wiesinger, Schenkel, Braune, and Ellicott. There is nothing ‘arbitrary’ in this explanation, as Meyer alleges; for in connection with any gift to the apostle from the members of a

church which he had founded, their indebtedness to him could not but be prominently before their minds, and to some extent also before his. Neither can I agree with Lightfoot, that the reference to Paul's having given the Philippians 'spiritual things' is 'plainly inappropriate.' On the contrary, it seems to me to accord admirably with the apostle's dignity of spirit, which shows itself conspicuously throughout the whole of this paragraph.

16. The force of *καὶ ἀπαξ καὶ δὶς* is 'not once only, but twice.' Comp. 1 Thess. ii. 18.

17. Τὸ δόμα seems to mean, according to the connection, 'the gift (in any case of this kind),' rather than, 'the gift (in this particular case).'

The repetition of *ἐπιζητῶ*, in a passage like this, where its use only once would have been sufficient for clearness, gives it on its second occurrence considerable emphasis,—well brought out by our English present with 'do ;' 'but I *do* seek the fruit.'

19. By many commentators, *ἐν δόξῃ* is connected with *πληρώσει*,—the meaning being variously conceived. Meyer and Alford take the sense to be—according to the use of *ἐν* with the same verb in Eph. v. 18—'shall supply your every need with (by means of) glory.' To this the objection presents itself, that we naturally expect here a promise relating—to a certain extent, at least—to the *present* life. Alford feels this, but does not succeed in showing clearly that the sense he gives to the words accords with this expectation. Calvin, Rilliet, De Wette, Schenkel, Eadie, and others, suppose the meaning to be 'in a glorious way.' But this use of the expression has hardly any parallel elsewhere; and the statement, so understood, does not seem altogether so full or so forcible as Paul's style leads one to expect. Lightfoot's view, approved by Hackett, that *ἐν* is to be taken in its ordinary local sense, and that the whole expression *πληρώσει ἐν δόξῃ* is 'a pregnant phrase, signifying "shall supply by placing you in glory,"'

is perhaps the best, if these words are to be taken together. But the sense thus obtained lies under the same objection as the view of Meyer. On the whole, it seems to me that the construction adopted by our translators, with Grotius, Storr, and others, is the most satisfactory. The non-repetition of the article before  $\epsilon\nu\delta\acute{o}\xi\eta$  presents no difficulty; because, as the verb  $\pi\lambdaou\tau\epsilon\bar{\alpha}n$  is construed with  $\epsilon\nu$  (see 1 Tim. vi. 18, and comp. 1 Cor. i. 5; 2 Cor. ix. 11), the cognate substantive also may be connected immediately with  $\epsilon\nu$ ,—according to the principle illustrated in the note on  $\kappa\omega\nu\omega\ni\bar{\alpha}\delta\pi\bar{\alpha}\rho\omega\tau\eta\bar{\sigma}\eta\mu\acute{e}\rho\bar{\alpha}s$ , in chap. i. 5. To our supposing this the construction here, however, it is objected that, as a matter of fact, the apostle has several times elsewhere  $\pi\lambdao\bar{\nu}t\bar{\sigma}os\tau\bar{\eta}s\delta\acute{o}\xi\eta s$ , and never  $\pi\lambdao\bar{\nu}t\bar{\sigma}\epsilon\nu\delta\acute{o}\xi\eta$ ; see Rom. ix. 23; Eph. i. 18, iii. 16; Col. i. 27. But to this it may be replied, that there is in the present passage, through the antithesis to  $\chi\rho\epsilon\bar{\iota}av$ , a special emphasis on  $\pi\lambdao\bar{\nu}t\bar{\sigma}os$ , such as is not found in the other places: ‘My God shall fully supply *your need* according to *His wealth*.’ Now the construction with the genitive would not have exhibited this emphasis; whilst that with  $\epsilon\nu$  obviously does.

## APPENDIX.

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### THE EPISTLE OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

POLYCARP was for many years pastor of the church in Smyrna. We know but little of his history. All we do know, however, shows him to have been a man of eminent wisdom and excellence, who most justly exercised great influence among the Christians of his time. He was personally acquainted, early writers tell us, with the Apostle John, and with others who had seen the Lord; and it is not impossible that he already held his charge in Smyrna at the time when, through John,<sup>1</sup> the Epistle contained in the 2nd chapter of Revelation was addressed to the church there by the glorified Saviour. During a persecution which broke out at Smyrna he was arrested, and brought before the proconsul. The magistrate said to him, ‘Revile Christ, and I will let thee go.’ ‘Eighty and six years have I served Him,’ replied the man of God, ‘and He never did me wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?’ Threats of being thrown to wild beasts, and of being burned to death, failed to move him; and, in the end, he was sentenced to the stake, and suffered martyrdom with heroic fortitude. The exact date of his death is uncertain; but it occurred, in all probability, between A.D. 160 and A.D. 170.

The letter to the Christians of Philippi, of which a translation is here given, is the only extant production of this Father. Its genuineness is supported by ample evidence, external and internal, and is all but universally admitted.

The occasion of the letter is easily gathered from statements made in it. The famous Ignatius, pastor of the church in Antioch, and a dear friend of Polycarp, had been condemned to death, and taken to Rome, there to be thrown to wild beasts in the amphitheatre. On his way he passed through Philippi, and was very kindly received by the brethren, and escorted on his journey. Thus led to cherish a peculiar interest in this illustrious servant of God, they wrote some time afterwards to Polycarp, asking that he would send them copies of any letters from Ignatius on Christian doctrine or duty, which he, or the church of Smyrna, had ; and also that he would himself write to them some words of counsel. With both requests he complied. As the martyrdom of Ignatius occurred between A.D. 107 and A.D. 116, the date of Polycarp's letter falls almost certainly before A.D. 120 ; for it seems plain, from passages in it, that it was written not very long after that event. Taking together the 9th paragraph and the close of the 13th, we see that Polycarp had heard of his friend's death, but was still only imperfectly acquainted with the closing incidents of his life, and anxious to obtain information.

The letter is interesting, from the illustration it gives of the piety and wisdom of Polycarp, and from the light it casts on the condition of the church of Philippi in the age immediately following that of the apostles. It is exceedingly valuable, too, for the distinct evidence it affords of the early existence, and wide circulation, of the books of the New Testament. Indisputable quotations are numerous ; and besides these, there are very many touches, in sentiment and in mode of expression, no less fitted than the direct quotations to impress a candid reader with the conviction that the writer had passages of the New Testament before his mind. The letter shows, also, that Polycarp held the apostles to have been *inspired* men. Such language as is employed by him in the third paragraph,— ‘ Neither am I, nor is any other like me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and illustrious Paul, who, when he was

among you, taught with exactness and certainty the word concerning the truth,—seems plainly to indicate that, whilst, perhaps, he had not attempted to define to himself very rigidly what inspiration was, yet assuredly he believed the difference between the ‘wisdom’ of the apostles and that of even the most eminent of other Christian teachers to be one not of degree merely, but of kind. His own teaching might be *helpful* to his brethren ; but the ‘exactness and certainty’ of Paul’s made it *authoritative*.

No Christian can read this simple and beautiful letter without having his faith confirmed. He will see that in the age immediately following that of the apostles,—within twenty years from the death of the Apostle John, and ninety years from the ascension of the Lord,—the same precious documents to which we look for trustworthy information regarding the facts of the Saviour’s life, and the doctrines of His religion, were with fullest confidence recognised by His followers as faithful and inspired. He will see that the same fundamental verities on which his hope rests were the stay of theirs,—the forgiving grace of the Father, the true Godhead of the Redeemer, His atoning death, His resurrection, ascension, mediatorial reign, and second coming.

#### EPISTLE OF POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

Polycarp, and the elders which are with him, to the church of God sojourning at Philippi. Mercy be multiplied to you, and peace, from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

I. I congratulate<sup>1</sup> you greatly in our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye received the ensamples of true love, and, as became you, accompanied on their way those who were

<sup>1</sup> Or, ‘rejoice with you.’ The tense in the original is the *epistolary* aorist, often best rendered in our idiom by the present.

bound with the chains which adorn saints,—the which are diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord ; and because the firm root of your faith, spoken of from ancient times, continueth until now, and bringeth forth fruit unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured<sup>1</sup> for our sins even unto death : whom God raised up, ‘ having loosed the pains of death ;’<sup>2</sup> in whom, having seen Him not, ye believe, ‘ and believing rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,’<sup>3</sup>—into which *joy* many desire to enter, knowing that ‘ by grace ye are saved,’ ‘ not of works,’<sup>4</sup> but by the will of God, through Jesus Christ.

II. ‘ Wherefore, girding up your loins,’<sup>5</sup> serve God in fear and truth, forsaking empty and foolish talking, and the error of the multitude, believing in Him that raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory, and a throne at His right hand ; to whom all things were made subject, which are in heaven and which are on earth ; whom all breath worshippeth ; who cometh as Judge of quick and dead ; whose blood God shall require of them that believe not on Him. Now He that raised Him up from the dead, shall raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what things He loved, abstaining from all unrighteousness, greediness, love of money, evil-speaking, false witness, ‘ not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing,’<sup>6</sup> or blow for blow, or curse for curse, but remembering the things which the Lord said in His teaching, ‘ Judge not, that ye be not judged ;’<sup>7</sup> Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven ; Show mercy, that mercy may be shown to you ;<sup>8</sup> ‘ With what measure ye mete,

<sup>1</sup> Literally, ‘endured to go.’

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. i. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. ii. 8, 9.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. i. 13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. vii. 1.

<sup>8</sup> These two references to the Sermon on the Mount (Luke vi. 37 ; Matt. v. 7) are made freely, the words in the original being different.

it shall be measured to you again ;'<sup>1</sup> and ‘Blessed are the poor,<sup>2</sup> and they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.’<sup>3</sup>

III. These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not having taken this charge upon myself, but because ye first called on me to do it. For neither am I, nor is any other like me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and illustrious Paul : who, when he was among you, in the presence of the men that then were, taught with exactness and certainty the word concerning the truth ; who also, when he was absent, wrote to you Epistles,<sup>4</sup> into the which if ye look closely, ye will be able to be built up into the faith given unto you, ‘which is the mother of us all,’<sup>5</sup>—hope following, love leading the way, *even love* to God and Christ and to our neighbour. For if any one have these within him,<sup>6</sup> he hath fulfilled the commandment of righteousness ; for he that hath love is far from all sin.

IV. The love of money is the beginning of all mischiefs. Knowing, therefore, that ‘we brought nothing into this world,’ but neither have we power to ‘carry anything out,’<sup>7</sup> let us arm ourselves with the armour of righteousness ; and teach ourselves, in the first place, to walk in

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vi. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Polycarp’s reference in the 11th paragraph to ‘the beginning of his (Paul’s) *Epistle*’ seems to show clearly that he knew of only one letter of the apostle to the Philippians,—that which has come down to us. The word ‘Epistles,’ in the place before us, was used by him, perhaps, through some doubt whether they might not have received others, though he knew of only one. The likelihood is, however, that the plural is only a rhetorical roundness of expression, the singular being really meant. There is abundant evidence that the Greeks often used *ιπτοτονα* with reference merely to one letter. See Lightfoot’s *Commentary on Philippians*, p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> An evident quotation from Gal. iv. 26, somewhat quaintly applied.

<sup>6</sup> Or, ‘be within these.’ The reading is doubtful.

<sup>7</sup> I Tim. vi. 7.

the commandment of the Lord ; then your wives also to walk in the faith and love and purity given to them, loving their own husbands with all truth, and cherishing affection to all others equally, with all self-restraint ; and let us teach ourselves<sup>1</sup> to train our children with the training of the fear of God.

Let the widows be discreet with regard to the faith of the Lord, making intercession without ceasing for all men, being far from all slander, evil-speaking, false witness, love of money, and every evil thing, knowing that they are an altar of God,<sup>2</sup> and that He looketh into all things, and nothing is hid from Him, neither of reasonings nor of thoughts, nor any of the secrets of the heart. Knowing, then, that ‘God is not mocked,’<sup>3</sup> we ought to walk worthily of His commandment and glory.

V. Likewise let the deacons be blameless in the presence of His righteousness, as servants<sup>4</sup> of God and Christ, and not of men,—not slanderers, not double-tongued, not lovers of money, temperate with regard to all things, compassionate, careful, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who became the servant of all : whom if we please in the world which now is, we shall receive also the world to come, according as He promised us to raise us up from the dead, and that, if we have a conversation worthy of Him,<sup>5</sup> we ‘shall also reign with Him,’<sup>6</sup>—if we believe.

<sup>1</sup> Or the supplement may be, ‘let us teach our wives.’

<sup>2</sup> Evidently a variation of Paul’s figure, ‘Ye are the temple of the living God’ (2 Cor. vi. 16). <sup>3</sup> Gal. vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Strictly ‘deacons,’ the original word from which ‘deacon’ is derived meaning ‘servant.’

<sup>5</sup> There seems to be a reference here to Phil. i. 27, the peculiar word meaning strictly ‘to live as citizens’ being employed in both. It is not improbable, as Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that, in the connection in which Polycarp here places the word, he intended this thought to come out distinctly : thus, ‘If we live as *citizens* in a way worthy of Him, we shall by and by be *kings* with Him.’ <sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Likewise also let the younger men be blameless in all things, caring before everything for purity, and reining themselves in from every evil. For it is good to cut ourselves off from the lusts which are in the world; because every lust warreth against the Spirit, and ‘neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God;’<sup>1</sup> neither they that do perversely. Wherefore it is needful to abstain from all these things, submitting yourselves to the elders and deacons, as to God and Christ.

Let the virgins walk in a blameless and pure conscience.

VI. And let the elders<sup>2</sup> also be compassionate, merciful towards all, turning back those that have been led astray, visiting all the sick, neglecting no widow, or orphan, or person in poverty, but providing always for what is seemly before God and men; keeping themselves from all anger, respect of persons, unrighteous judgment; being far removed from all love of money; not hastily believing *evil* against any one; not harsh in judgment, knowing that we are all sinners.<sup>3</sup> If, therefore, we pray the Lord to forgive us, we ought also to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and ‘must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ,’ and ‘every one give account of himself.’<sup>4</sup> Let

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> It will be observed that not the slightest evidence presents itself in this letter, of any approach in the constitution of the church at Philippi towards prelatical episcopacy. The office-bearers in Polycarp’s days were still, as in Paul’s (Phil. i. 1), ‘the bishops’—otherwise called ‘elders’—‘and deacons.’

<sup>3</sup> Literally, ‘debtors of sin.’ Compare Luke xiii. 4, in the original, and the parallel in ver. 2. Taking this expression here along with the first clause of the next sentence, we cannot fail to see a reference by Polycarp to Matt. vi. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiv. 10, 12.

us, therefore, so serve Him with fear and all reverence, as He Himself commanded,—and the apostles who preached the gospel unto us, and the prophets who announced beforehand the coming of our Lord ; zealous for what is good, keeping ourselves from the stumbling-blocks, and the false brethren, and those that carry about *on their lips* the name of the Lord in hypocrisy, who

VII. lead away vain men. For every one ‘that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,’ is an anti-Christ ;<sup>1</sup> and whosoever confesseth not the testimony of the cross is of the devil ; and whosoever perverteth the oracles of the Lord according to his own lusts, and saith that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, this is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, leaving the vanity of the multitude, and their false teachings, let us turn to the word which hath been handed down to us from the beginning ; ‘watching unto prayer,’<sup>2</sup> and persevering in fastings ; in supplications asking God, who seeth all things, to ‘lead us not into temptation :’<sup>3</sup> as saith the Lord, ‘The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’<sup>4</sup>

VIII. Let us, then, without ceasing, cleave to our Hope, and to the Earnest of our righteousness, which is Christ Jesus,—‘who bare our sins in His own body to the tree,’<sup>5</sup>—‘who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,’<sup>6</sup> but endured all things for us, ‘that we might live in Him.’<sup>7</sup> Let us therefore be imitators of His patience ; and if we suffer for His name, let us glorify Him ; for in Himself He set us this example,—and we have believed this.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 7. This quotation is made freely, a different word being used for ‘prayer.’

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvi. 41.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 24.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 22.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John iv. 9.

IX. I beseech you all, therefore, to obey the word of righteousness, and to practise all patience, which ye have also seen<sup>1</sup> set forth before your eyes, not only in the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus,<sup>2</sup> but also in others, some of your own number, and in Paul himself and the rest of the apostles ; being fully persuaded that all these ‘did not run in vain,’<sup>3</sup> but in faith and righteousness, and that they are *gone* to the place due to them, *to be* with the Lord, with whom also they suffered, —for they loved not the present world, but Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised up by God.

X. Stand<sup>4</sup> fast therefore in these things, and follow the example of the Lord ; firm and unchangeable in faith, ‘lovers of the brotherhood,’<sup>5</sup> ‘kindly affectioned one to another,’<sup>6</sup> joined together in the truth, displaying to one another the gentleness of the Lord, despising no one. When ye can do good, defer it not, for ‘alms doth deliver from death.’<sup>7</sup> ‘All of you be subject one to another,’<sup>8</sup> ‘having your conversation irreproachable among the Gentiles,’<sup>9</sup>—that from your good works both ye *yourselves* may receive praise, and the Lord may not

<sup>1</sup> Or, according to Jacobson’s text, an imperative,—‘which also see.’ This seems unnatural. The sounds of *ει* and *αι* have often been confounded by the transcribers of Greek mss. In the case of this very word *ειδετε* or *ηδετε*, see illustrations in Phil. i. 30 ; James v. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Of the latter two martyrs nothing is known. From the connection in which their names occur here, we may infer that they were taken to Rome to suffer along with Ignatius.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> From this point to the end of the Epistle, the original Greek is not extant, except in the larger part of the 13th paragraph, which has been preserved by the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius. Here, therefore, we are obliged to follow an old Latin version. In this part, of course, we cannot feel so certain regarding the exact wording of references to the New Testament, as in the earlier portion.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xii. 10.

<sup>7</sup> This is a quotation from the apocryphal Book of Tobit, iv. 10, xii. 9.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. v. 5.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 12.

be blasphemed among you. But woe to him through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed ! Therefore teach all men sobriety, in which live also yourselves.

XI. I have been grieved exceedingly for Valens, who was once made an elder among you ;<sup>1</sup> because he is so ignorant of the place which was given to him. I advise, therefore, that ye keep yourselves from covetousness ; and be chaste and truthful. Keep yourselves from all evil. But he who cannot govern himself in these things, how doth he declare this *duty* unto another ? If any one have not kept himself from covetousness, he will be defiled with idolatry,<sup>2</sup> and judged as if among the heathen. But who *of you* are ignorant of the judgment of the Lord ? ‘Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world?’<sup>3</sup> as Paul teacheth. But I have perceived or heard of no such thing in you, among whom the blessed Paul laboured ; who are *praised*<sup>4</sup> in the beginning of his Epistle. For he glorieth of you in all the churches which alone at that time knew God,—but we<sup>5</sup> did not yet know Him. I am greatly grieved therefore, brethren, for Valens,<sup>6</sup> and for his wife,—to whom the Lord grant true repentance ! Be ye also, therefore, sober-minded in this matter ; and do not think of such as enemies, but call them back, as weak and erring members, that ye may save the body of you all. For,

<sup>1</sup> Valens and his wife, it would seem, had given some very distressing evidences of avarice, of which Polycarp had heard. This fact probably accounts for the emphasis laid by him, throughout the letter, on the needfulness of shunning this vice. He says, however, a little below, that, so far as he knew, the case of Valens was exceptional among the Philippian Christians.

<sup>2</sup> An evident reference to Col. iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. vi. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Some such word as ‘praised’ has, no doubt, been accidentally omitted by a copyist of the version.

<sup>5</sup> The people of Smyrna.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Him’ in the version.

XII. doing this, ye build yourselves up. For I have confidence that ye are well versed in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing is hid from you ; and it is not my part *to try to build you up.*<sup>1</sup> Only, as it is said in these Scriptures, ‘ Be ye angry, and sin not,’ and ‘ Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.’<sup>2</sup> Blessed is he who remembereth *this*, which I believe ye do.

Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Eternal Priest Himself, Jesus Christ the Son of God, build you up in faith and truth, and in all gentleness and freedom from wrath, and in patience and long-suffering and endurance and chastity ; and give you ‘ lot and part ’<sup>3</sup> among His saints,—and to us with you, and to all who are under heaven, that shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Father, who raised Him from the dead !

Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings, and authorities, and princes ; and for them that persecute and hate you ; and for ‘ the enemies of the cross,’<sup>4</sup> that your fruit may be manifest among all,<sup>5</sup>—that ye may be perfect in Him.

XIII. Ye wrote to me, and Ignatius also, that if any one went *from hence* into Syria, he should take also the letter from you ;<sup>6</sup> which I will see to, if I obtain an opportunity,—

<sup>1</sup> The text of the Latin version appears to be corrupt here. By the supplement given above, however,—in accordance with a suggestion of Jacobson,—the sense runs smoothly.

<sup>2</sup> The former of these precepts occurs in Ps. iv. 4 (as given in the Septuagint and Vulgate), and also in Eph. iv. 26,—where alone the second precept is found. The mode of citation shows distinctly, whether we regard both as quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians, or the one from Psalms, that Polycarp, and the Philippians, to whom he wrote, held the books of the New Testament to belong, in the fullest sense, to the ‘Holy Scriptures.’

<sup>3</sup> Acts viii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iii. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Or, ‘ in all things.’

<sup>6</sup> The reference seems to be to a letter addressed to the church of Antioch, and forwarded through Polycarp.

either in person, or by one whom I shall send to act also as your deputy.

The letters of Ignatius—those which were sent to us by him, and others, as many as we have with us—we send to you, as ye desired ; the which are subjoined to this letter. And from them ye will be able to obtain much help ; for they treat of faith and patience, and all upbuilding as concerneth our Lord.

Regarding Ignatius himself also, and those that were with him,<sup>1</sup> make ye known to me what ye have learned with any certainty.

XIV. These things I write to you by Crescens, whom up to the present day I have commended to you, and now commend, for he hath lived with us free from blame ; as, I believe, likewise with you. Moreover, ye will hold his sister commended when she cometh to you. Be ye safe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with you all. Amen !

<sup>1</sup> The Latin version has a present tense here, *qui cum eo sunt* ; but, no doubt, this is a mistranslation of Polycarp's τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ. We see from the 9th paragraph that he knew of Ignatius's death.

THE END.

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